

Corpus Dei



Anton Bonnici



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Youssef Alaoui and adapted from his
original short story)

*In memory of
Donatien Alphonse de Sade
&
Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*

*And to all those who stop hoping
and start doing.*

*Either kill me or take me as I am,
because I'll be damned
if I ever change.
-Marquis de Sade*

*Nothing is so painful to the human
mind as a great and sudden change.
-Mary Shelley, Frankenstein*

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By Anton Bonnici

Foreword by Genna Riveccio

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Foreword

Although few might make the connection between a certain incident in the Marquis de Sade's life and the tale of Frankenstein, Anton Bonnici is here to glaringly connect the dots with this pair of thematically intertwined plays, collectively titled *Corpus Dei*. Divided into two parts, "Farewell to the Corpse of God a.k.a. The Pervert's Wager" and "Return of the Corpse of God a.k.a. The Monster's Tale," each is harrowing and illuminative in its own way, yet both share a common motif: that in every dynamic, there must be the oppressor and the oppressed, with the latter turning into the former after enough time spent down at heel (and so the vicious cycle repeats).

While the perspective of the de Sade play focuses on the oppressor—de Sade—the perspective of the Frankenstein one focuses on the oppressed (who resultantly turns into the oppressor)—the Monster. And a key theme that dominates in each is one that can perhaps

best be described as “a fear of mind expansion.” Of course, there’s a fine line between “mind expansion” and outright madness, as both the Marquis de Sade and Victor Frankenstein exemplify.

In “The Pervert’s Wager,” the person very afraid indeed of having her mind expanded is a fan maker and occasional sex worker named Jeanne Testard. Based on the very woman who reported the Marquis to the police after being locked in his apartment all night, where “The Pervert’s Wager” sets its stage, Bonnici takes his readers on the same horrific journey as Testard...with the same intent (albeit with slightly less sadism involved) to open the eyes of those who so desperately want to keep them closed.

As for Testard’s “awakening,” to help make her see “the light” (or perhaps “the dark” is the better phrase here), the Marquis has a very specific act in mind that he wants her to perform (this also based on the varying accounts of the night in question). And it hardly falls under the category of “sex work,”

though it will technically “give pleasure,” at least to de Sade.

His “simple” request is this: for Testard to urinate on a crucifix. Ergo, “liberating” this woman from her quaint and naïve belief that God isn’t dead. And that, were she not so servile and sniveling in her beliefs like the majority of the lower class, she might understand what it truly takes to be “at the top” of the societal food chain. And what it takes, as we’ve seen in real life, is complete and total sociopathy. In other words, what the Marquis ultimately displays in ensuring he gets exactly what he wants out of his initially unsuspecting victim. So it is that he eventually tells her,

I’m not just ANY cruel, rich pervert. You see, I am the TRUE face of high society! I am the face of all of them, every single one of them, all the kings and queens and lords and bishops and popes, the true face all of them are trying to hide. Unlike the rest of them, I am not ashamed of the truth of my essence. They are. And that’s what makes them so pathetic, that’s why they spend so much time

concocting rules and laws and systems to control and harness and rein. Their fear that they will be found out.

If it sounds like the familiar rantings of an ultimate oppressor/sociopath like Donald Trump and recalls the unearthing of just how many rich, powerful men were on the Epstein list, one wouldn't be off the mark in making those correlations. Indeed, whereas the Monster/corpse in "The Monster's Tale" mordantly declares, "I am life," de Sade essentially declares "I am the future." Further explaining to Jeanne,

I've seen faces in my dreams, faces across time, the face of all those that will come to bear this same understanding, the face of all those that will know that they are free to desecrate the corpse of God with impunity. I'm not only the face of this century, I'm even more so the face of the next, and the one after that, the nineteenth, the twentieth, the twenty-first; this world will not end unless I end, unless we end! For it is us, the cruel, perverted masters of the universe that have built this world, and the less

ashamed we are of our perversity, the more shall we rule it until there is nothing left to rule!

The ominous (even if fictional) prophecy has patently been fulfilled. And it seems that, soon enough, if (and when) certain environmental and AI-related predictions come true, there truly will be nothing left for these “elites” to rule over except a giant dumpster fire (a literal one this time, as opposed to just the ongoing metaphorical one). And, talking of fires, let us not forget the important dialogue between Victor and his monster. The former being forced to come face to face with this “abomination” of his own making and at last being confronted with the very “thing” he oppressed. And oh, how this *thing* is fucking pissed. Yet, even for all his rage toward his “Creator” (just like children with their parents), the Monster still tells Victor, “I am even willing to forgive you. I am. Like your God on the cross did, remember?” So, here, too, Bonnici provides another through line between “The Pervert’s Wager” and “The Monster’s Tale.”

And, this time, instead of the oppressor de Sade breaking down the cruelty of humanity, it is the oppressed Monster who gets to have his say on the matter, telling Victor,

Of the histories I have read, humankind has only shown rejection to the wretched it creates, and then it destroys them, for that is the method with which humankind insists on and proves its purity, hence its supposedly righteous claim to power. All vanity, all of it. I'm another victim of the vanity of humankind.

A kind of vanity that continues to escalate while going unchecked. In this, Bonnici's battle cry for change, the hope—that prosaic word, concept and belief—is that people will stop *just* hoping. And start doing something actionable to unshackle themselves from this dichotomy of being the oppressed *and* oppressor.

Genna Rivieccio
Editor, The Opiate Books
Fall 2025

Prologue to Part One

The house lights are still on, the red curtain is open and the black curtain is closed, keeping the set out of sight. A male-identifying actor (M) and a female-identifying actor (F) are onstage in front of the black curtain helping each other into their costumes and assisting with other final touches (makeup, wigs, etc.). They may have chairs or stools, whatever they need. They address the audience as they are getting ready.

M: Hi! Good evening.

F: Hello everyone. Thanks for coming.

M: My name is (*name of actor here*).

F: And I'm (*name of actor here*).

M: Today we're here to give you this presentation of Anton Bonnici's *Corpus Dei – The Corpse of God*.

F: A telling of two separate tales, from two sources, one historical, the other fictional. Yet both constitute a conversation that happens over the course of a night. The two conversations may seem completely alien to each other at first, but we hope to convince you otherwise by the end of the evening.

M: Please, be aware, if not warned, that this is an adult event, and these are tales intended for adults only.

F: But what do we really mean by “adult,” you might ask? Isn’t it just a matter of being of a certain age, of having lived enough years on this planet to be somewhat self-regulating and functional in society? No, that’s not really what we mean here.

M: For tonight, being an adult is all about looking, seeing, keeping

your eyes open where children, of course, dare not. By adult, we mean someone who is ready to look at the truth unflinchingly, without reservations, face the horrors of our reality, and live in full consciousness of it. That is an adult.

F: And isn't this how we try to protect childhood? By not allowing young ones to see the things their delicate minds cannot handle? *Quick, cover their eyes*, Mom or Dad would shout! We protect their innocence by hiding reality from them. Well, if you are here, you are not innocent, for there is no such thing as an "innocent adult."

M: Therefore, no one should be covering their eyes. The horror of the truth shall be looked upon in full view and it is our responsibility to face this horror and ask all the pertinent questions about it including

the most important one of all: where is this horror in my life? Is it inside of me, outside of me, in my family, my friends? Have I been shutting my eyes at this perversion, claiming innocence?

F: And there *shall* be perversion, so please be warned; what you'll be witnessing is a series of sexual and violent acts of the worst kind. There shall be obscenity, exploitation, abuse, violation, pain, blood, heresy and blasphemy. We mean it. Yet we assure you that none of this is gratuitous. What we will show you needs to be seen and contemplated, for it speaks to the very nature of our society and its most fundamental reality; the reality of the oppressor and the oppressed, and the submission of this reality to the nature of power and desire.

By now they should be ready in full costume. The red curtain closes, and they step in front of it to conclude the prologue to Part One.

M: Dear audience, for the first part of our evening, I shall be playing for you the role of Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, infamously known as the Marquis de Sade. He is celebrated for his pornographic works of literature, such as the tales of *Justine* and her kinkier sister, *Juliette*, and more notorious still, the infamous manuscript known as *The 120 Days of Sodom*. A text of such descriptive pornographic horror that it was supposedly nicknamed the Bible of Evil, and probably the first quasi-scientific exploration in book form of every possible sexual and violent perversion known to humankind.

F: And I shall be playing his companion for the evening, Madame Jeanne Testard. The night in question is October 19, 1763, when the Marquis

was still in his twenties and not yet the writer we know of today. We are in Paris, in a small private apartment owned by the Marquis, away from his wife and children, in what would today be the fourteenth arrondissement. Little is known about me, other than I am a fan maker by day and a sex worker by night. Though not fully legal, sex work was regulated by government officials at the time and the police had their own “supervisors” for this sort of thing. So, everything known about this night comes from an official police report that Jeanne has made after the events that shall be presented to you here.

M: Of course, we have taken plenty of artistic liberties in this presentation, so do not expect any historical accuracy. Though we shall strive to expose what we believe is

the heart of some truth in all that
transpired.

F: Therefore, without further
ado, ladies and gentlemen, we
present to you *Corpus Dei Part One –
Farewell to the Corpse of God.*

They enter behind the curtain. House lights off.

Part One:
Farewell to the
Corpse of God
a.k.a. The Pervert's Wager

A conversation between the Marquis de
Sade & Madame Jeanne Testard
18-19 October 1763, Paris, France
A fictionalized historical event

Open curtain. The set displays the interior of Donatien's private apartment in Paris. There are two sides to its organization, to the center left, a dinner table, all set up, with an adjacent cabinet already stocked with a dish of fruits and light snacks, a rack of wine bottles and a carafe of water. One bottle of wine is already open on the table, with two wine glasses poised next to it. Candles are also already lit. To the right lie two furnishings covered in red velvet, one of them the height of a podium, the other smaller, the height of a foot stool, and the contents of which need to remain a mystery until it's time for their reveal. Offstage right is a tiny cloakroom and a toilette.

Erik Satie's Gnossienne No. 1 plays to the still moment as we take in the room. After a few seconds, the music fades out and we hear a door opening offstage left. DONATIEN walks in wearing a wet coat and a hat; we can hear the rain.

DONATIEN: Please, Madame, come in! Let's remove ourselves from that

torrent. You'll find it pleasantly warm in here.

JEANNE follows DONATIEN inside the apartment, also wearing a coat. She looks around curiously. Her gaze falls on the candlelit table for two.

JEANNE: A table for two?
 Seems like I'm in for a treat tonight.

DONATIEN: *(as he approaches her to remove her coat)* Are you not used to the romantic touch, Madame?

JEANNE: *(as she gives him her coat)* On these occasions, no. Usually it is straight to the bedroom as soon as I step in.

Now we may see that JEANNE is wearing a red corset and red skirt. A clearly seductive ensemble, but not in bad taste.

DONATIEN: Tonight, we might not even make it to the bedroom, my dear.

JEANNE looks at DONATIEN with suspicion as he takes his own coat and hat off and drops the coats offstage right.

JEANNE: Then why am I here if not to entertain you in the bedroom, sir? I hope you don't intend to do it on the cold floor, it's truly much less enjoyable than people make it out to be.

DONATIEN: Unlike what many of my detractors might think, I'm not a barbarian (*as he gestures towards the table and starts pouring the wine*). I brought you here for something *far more* elevated.

JEANNE: *(as she sits at the table
and takes the glass he's offering)* Such
as?

DONATIEN: Such as: philosophical discussion.

JEANNE: Philosophical
discussion?

DONATIEN: Yes, I brought you
here, first and foremost, to talk. I want
to know what you think, a woman
with graces such as yours and street
wit to match, I want to know what you
think about good and evil. About why
we, human beings, are here, alive at
this place and time. And then, if the
discussion is fruitful enough, we might
even hold a little experiment, a test of
sorts, to confirm our thoughts.

JEANNE: Bedroom or no
bedroom, I still expect to collect what
we agreed upon, Monsieur de Sade.

DONATIEN: *(as he pulls a small cloth
pouch out of his trousers and puts it on the
table in front of her)* Of course! Right
here, all in advance.

JEANNE: (*as she raises her glass
towards his*) Well then, I'm ready to
answer any questions you might have.

DONATIEN: To philosophy!

JEANNE: To philosophy!

They both drink.

DONATIEN: Tell me, Madame
Testard, are people essentially good
or essentially evil? What has your life
experience thought you?

JEANNE: My life experience?
Would you like an anecdote?

DONATIEN: Marvelous! I love a
little story.

JEANNE: Here's a case that one
might consider peculiar, or maybe
specific, but in my line of evening work
is in truth quite common, though not to
say the rule. I know of a man who is
very upstanding, a church-going

family man, with a good business and a good name, his wife and children love him and he loves them back. You ask of him, and you'd hear nothing but praise. Yet, every first Sunday of the month, he pays me a visit to conduct a very specific ritual. This man pays me a considerable sum to abuse me, verbally and physically. First, he always starts by staring at me and calling me names. He starts with the basics—"whore," "slut," "cunt"—and then he gets more and more creative: "a rotten failed abortion from Satan's loins" or "a bastard pile of human waste from the collected shits of drunken sailors," whatever. My role is to say nothing back, ever, I just stare at him as he comes up with the most creative ways to insult me. The more vehemence he spits at me, the more worked up he gets, until he can't take it anymore and he slaps me. That's when I know it's time for me to take off

my clothes and for the man to grab me by my hips, throw me on the bed facedown and sodomize me very violently until he discharges himself in what seem like agonizing, orgasmic throes. Once the moment passes, the man collapses like a rag doll, as if his spirit has left him, fully exorcised of his demonic possession. I let him sleep for an hour or so, after which he wakes up and very gently asks me if I'm okay. I reassure him that I haven't been truly harmed but he insists repeatedly that he's sorry and that he wishes he didn't have to, but it's unavoidable. And so he leaves, with my blessing, for him to be the gentleman everybody knows, until it's time for him to visit me again, the first Sunday of the following month. And like him, to one degree or other, there are many.

DONATIEN: Exquisite! So, tell me,
 what does this say to you about human
 nature?

JEANNE: It says that people are
 essentially slaves to their needs, neither
 good nor evil, it's only needs. And if
 their needs demand that they do harm
 unto others or, as one might say,
 perform evil deeds to satisfy those
 needs, they will do so. As long as the
 thirst is quenched.

DONATIEN: Very rational, I dare
 say! I should have known. But whence
 do those needs arrive? Cannot we say
 that if one is endowed with desires that
 require harm be done unto others, then
 one has clearly the seed of evil already
 within?

JEANNE: But how can a desire
 make one evil if one hasn't chosen it?
 One goes about their day and
 suddenly feels a pull, an emotion rises

inside, and a vision comes to their eyes, there is something they need to have, something they just have to do. Desire is born, not willed. Thus, desire happens, it comes to us, we do not plan or choose these impulses, so why should we be judged evil for having them?

DONATIEN: But what if one is overflowing with unrestrainable desires? What if one lives in a state of pure, debauched liberty giving way to every horrible impulse of crime and murder?

JEANNE: Could such a person truly exist?

DONATIEN: Of all things, I thought you'd know not to play the innocent with me!

JEANNE: It is an honest question. Yes, I have seen and met many horrible individuals, but none that are not

enslaved by some passion or other. They think themselves free, yet I don't believe they are, not at all.

DONATIEN: Let me tell you of Curval. He used to be a high-ranking officer in the judiciary, but had to be discharged from duty you see. The details of the case are not privy to many, but these things happen to have a way of coming to me. Curval was a libertine, every sort of perversion was familiar to him, and those who knew him personally had the strong suspicion he owed his vast fortune to nothing other than two or three murders. However that may be, it is the following events—which attracted some unfortunate publicity—that were responsible for his exclusion from the Court.

There lived in the neighborhood of Curval's house a miserable street porter who, as the father of a charming

little girl, was ridiculous enough to be a person of sensibility. Twenty messages of every kind had already arrived containing proposals relating to the poor fellow's daughter. He and his wife had remained unshaken despite this barrage aimed at their corruption, and Curval, the source of these embassies, only irritated by the growing number of refusals they had evoked, knew not what tack to take in order to get his hands upon the girl to subject her to his libidinous caprices, until it struck to him that by simply having the father broken, he would lead the daughter to his bed. The thing was as nicely conceived as executed. Two or three bullies in Curval's pay intervened in the suit, and soon the wretched porter was enmeshed in an imaginary crime which seemed to have been committed at his door and which got him speedily lodged in one of the Conciergerie's dungeons.

Curval, as one would expect, soon took charge of the case, and, having no desire to permit it to drag on, arranged in the space of three days, thanks to his knavery and his gold, to have the unlucky porter condemned to be broken on the wheel, without the culprit ever having committed any crime but that of wishing to preserve his honor and safeguard his daughter's.

Meanwhile, the solicitations were renewed. The mother was brought in, and it was explained to her that she alone could save her husband, that if she were to satisfy Curval, he would snatch her husband from the dreadful fate awaiting him. Further hesitation was impossible; the woman made inquiries. Curval knew perfectly well to whom she addressed herself, the counsels were his creatures, and they gave her unambiguous replies: she

ought not waste a moment. The poor woman herself brought her daughter weeping to her judge's feet; the latter could not have been more liberal with his promises, nor have been less eager to keep his word. Not only did he fear lest, were he to deal honorably and spare the husband, the man might go and raise an uproar upon discovering the price that had been paid to save his life, but the scoundrel even found a further delight, a yet keener one, in arranging to have himself given what he wished without being obliged to make any return.

This thought led to others; numerous criminal possibilities entered his head, and their effect was to increase his perfidious lubricity. And this is how he set about the matter so as to put the maximum of infamy and piquancy into the scene:

His mansion stood facing a spot where criminals are sometimes executed in Paris, and as this particular offense had been committed in that quarter of the city, he won assurance the punishment would be meted out on this particular square. The wretch's wife and daughter arrived at Curval's home at the appointed hour; all windows overlooking the square were well shuttered, so that, from the apartments where he amused himself with his victims, nothing at all could be seen of what was going on outside. Apprised of the exact minute of the execution, the rascal selected it for the deflowering of the little girl who was held in her mother's arms, and everything was so happily arranged that Curval discharged into the child's ass the moment her father expired. Instantly, he'd completed his business. "Come have a look," said he, opening a window looking upon the square.

“Come see how well I’ve kept up my end of the bargain.” And one of his two princesses saw her father, the other her husband, delivering up his soul to the headsman’s steel.

Both collapsed in a faint, but Curval had provided for everything: this swoon was their agony, they’d both been poisoned, and nevermore opened their eyes. Notwithstanding the precautions he had taken to swathe the whole of this exploit in the most profound mystery, something did indeed transpire: nothing was known of the women’s death, but there existed a lively suspicion he had been untruthful in connection with the husband’s case. His motive was half-known, and his eventual retirement from the bench was the outcome. As of this moment, no longer having to maintain appearances, Curval flung himself into a new ocean of crimes. He

sent everywhere for victims to sacrifice to the perversity of his tastes. Men, women, children—anything was fuel to his rage. And at its bidding, he performed excesses which would have got his head between block and blade a thousand times over were it not for the silver he distributed and the esteem he enjoyed, factors whereby he was a thousand times protected.

JEANNE: What a hideous man.

DONATIEN: Is he still just another victim of his own needs like your client? Another slave to passion?

JEANNE: Oh no, they are two very different people. One, my client, is actually practicing restraint and gives way to his needs only when absolutely necessary and only with a consenting performer such as myself. My client, in truth, insults and harms no one. Whereas your Curval has no restraint

at all, he allows himself to simply follow every whim and desire uncontrollably, destroying all those he comes into contact with. He is no victim.

DONATIEN: So according to you, it is the action then that deserves the judgement. If the man is unable to harness these needs and restrain himself, if he gives way and performs the deed which causes harm unto others, that is then the evil, not the desire in itself.

JEANNE: Only if it is avoidable. If they allow themselves to enact that desire wantonly, without any reservations, yes that becomes evil; it transforms into the unchecked greed and exploitation we see all around us. For there must be a struggle, some form of resistance to one's impulses. If the action is truly unavoidable, either because the passions are too strong for

the weak person to resist or because it is truly a necessity for survival, a “do or die” situation, so to speak, then, I believe, no matter how evil the deed, you should still be spared. Unlike your Curval who should be punished, and eventually will be.

DONATIEN: Spared from what?
Punished by whom?

JEANNE: Spared from the fires
of hell or thrown right into them. God
would know your struggle and hence
be merciful or not.

DONATIEN: No! You were doing so
well! You were thinking rationally
through the motions of the human
passions without falling for the usual
traps. Why ruin it all by mentioning
Him?! Fuck God! Only I speak of God
under this roof because only I know
how God deserves to be spoken of.

Here, have some water, wash your mouth from that disgusting word.

He pours some water from the carafe into a big mug and hands it to her aggressively, she takes it to placate him and drinks it all as he urges her on.

DONATIEN: Go on, all of it! There, now, that mouth is clean enough again for me to receive words from it.

JEANNE: I'm eager to hear more about what you think now, Monsieur. *(seductively, placating his mood after that sudden flare)* Please, tell me: why are we here?

DONATIEN: We are here to discover what we are and inflict ourselves freely upon the world or submit to it, the more we understand our nature! Take your gentleman, your good man that needs to exorcise himself once a month. You see someone who's a slave to this desire that needs expiating to continue to function in society as the

good man that he is and, thus, you forgive him his indulgence. You still see him as a good man. Yet all I see is a coward and a slave, too, yes, but not to his needs, a slave to society. That man is truly himself, only when he is with you. Only through those acts of intense release is he coming in touch with a shred of his true nature. Everything else is nothing but a pathetic performance that society makes him act out and he does it; he does it all because he is afraid, terrified, of being cast out. You have him so wrong, Madame Testard. That man is an evil man, his desires are truly horrendous, and yet he is so afraid of being seen for what he truly is that he has to release himself only once a month in secret with you! Pathetic! I wouldn't be surprised if he has only fucked his wife as many times as they have children, poor woman.

JEANNE: So, you'd rather he
 does what he does to me to his wife?

DONATIEN: Of course! Three, four,
 five times a day if needs be! Tear her to
 shreds! Let them both come to terms
 with the nature of their existence. One
 to inflict and the other to succumb, and
 in that intensity, experience the only
 truly spiritual extension of the senses
 into the beyond that elevates our life
 above this sacrilegious mundanity!

JEANNE: But there are good
 men in this world that will not inflict
 their cruelty on the innocent.

DONATIEN: On the contrary, my
 dear, there is no such thing as a good
 man at all. There are only men and
 cowards. You, of all people should
 know. Aren't you ashamed to reduce
 yourself to such utilitarian purposes?
 It's as if you are a nurse to cowardice
 itself instead of the priestess of ecstasy

you are meant to be. In ancient Greece, whores used to line up before the entrance of temples, mediums in the flesh to the bliss of the gods, not some frivolous, once-a-month expiation two jerks away from the wank of a ten-year-old!

JEANNE: I have found a path that makes me useful to the community around me. There is already enough savagery in the streets of Paris; what we need is a means to assuage the senses and dilute beastly desires, not fan the flames further. What women like me provide is an essential service in a society that has suppressed all public engagement with its own deepest desires. What is pushed down—what is kept hidden and in the dark—festers, infects its host and boils back up into a malady. So yes, we are not unlike nurses, here to treat the overflow of excess desire out

of sight, with a discretion that is tolerable, so some can stop being cruel and maybe even be good.

DONATIEN: The horror. You're akin to a public servant! Another cog in this machinery meant to hold us down in mediocrity whilst *They*, all the ones at the top, relish in extremity itself. Don't you ever desire something more transcendental?

JEANNE: I've spent some time in Fournier's establishment too, you know! There I had my fair share of extreme debauchery, yet I believe one needs to have limits if one is to cherish being alive.

DONATIEN: Life might just be the most overrated thing of all. Unlike the celebrated Fournier! Tell me something that marked you there, describe to me a vision you'll never forget.

JEANNE: A vision? My eyes were plucked, chewed and put back in their sockets every passing day in that brothel. But here's one that took me long to understand. At Fournier's establishment, we had a curious article of furniture: a kind of toilet chair, provided with the usual hole and set against the wall; things were so arranged that a man could lie in such a way that while his body extended into the neighboring room, his shoulders passed through an opening and his head occupied the place usually reserved for the chamber pot. I had been appointed to the task, and kneeling between his legs, I sucked his prick as best I could throughout the operation. Well, this extraordinary ceremony consisted in having a workman, who was paid to act a part whose full consequences he neither knew nor divined. His job, I say, as a man of the people, was to enter the

room containing the chair, climb upon it, and do his business squarely upon the face of the patient over whom I was toiling on. But the shit bearer had absolutely to be a poor drudge fetched in from the humblest milieu, he had as well to be old and ugly. He was inspected before being put to work, and were he to lack any of these qualities, our libertine would have nothing to do with him. During all this, I saw nothing, but heard rather a lot: the instant of collision was also that of my man's discharge, his fuck sprang down my throat the same moment the turd splashed upon his face, and when he emerged from beneath the chair and got to his feet, I saw by the state he was in that he had been handsomely served. By chance, after the exercise was over, I happened to meet the fellow who had performed so brilliantly; he was from the Auvergne, a good, honest chap who earned his

livelihood working with stonemasons. He seemed delighted to earn a crown by doing naught but ridding himself of what he would have had one way or another to expel from his bowels, and this little chore struck him as infinitely less arduous than carrying his tools. He was, what for his looks, quite dreadful to behold and must have been over forty. The entire operation made me question the very nature of desire and sexual excitement.

DONATIEN: What was so enigmatic about that ritual?

JEANNE: It was the very first time I saw a grown man of certain standing relish the feces of another, and to think that the other was of a much lower standing than him perplexed me. How could this activity be arousing?

DONATIEN: And what conclusion
 did you come to now?

JEANNE: Spending all of his
 days ruling over underlings and
 people he considers his inferior, an
 imbalance must have been created
 somewhere inside this man. A tension
 grows as, day after day, he makes
 others do his bidding—a voice, maybe,
 challenging his authority, making him
 question his superiority and his
 responsibilities. So, he needs a moment
 to address the imbalance, you see. For
 one moment, he allows the man of
 lower standing to shit on his face in a
 form of expiation for all the pain and
 suffering he must cause other inferiors
 day in, day out with his authority. And
 the moment of shame and humility is
 coupled with the sensation of pleasure,
 having his prick in my mouth. There's
 the connection, two separate activities,
 happening in two separate rooms, yet

connected by the simultaneous sensation, one canceling out the other. Hence, humiliation is no longer a pain, the imbalance in this man's soul is put back in place, with a victimless pleasure, and he may go on with his everyday life in peace.

DONATIEN: Once again, all you see is a man enslaved by his own constitution, a victim of his own passions. But you're not seeing the whole picture, Madame. What if there is another pleasure, far more extreme and far from victimless, that he is taking in his everyday life? What if this man is a much crueler, authoritative master than you make him out to be? He spends entire days whipping errand boys, sodomizing the wives and daughters of his accountants and murdering for pleasure the odd street urchin every once in a while. And that shit-eating moment you witnessed is

nothing but a small corner of a far larger, more macabre tapestry?

JEANNE: There's no escape from your vision, is there? We are either born to inflict pain or born to receive it, and our only purpose in life is to discover who we are and live truthfully our own nature. Whether good or evil, innocent or corrupt, doesn't make a difference in the end because there will be no ultimate judgement, only this life of the flesh. Hence, the only worthy life is a life of truth in ecstasy.

DONATIEN: And total freedom! Truth, ecstasy and freedom! But the disgusting rulers of this world do not want everyone to taste truth and freedom and ecstasy! They keep it all for themselves, in private, in secret. That is why they do not allow us our liberties in public! We are contained by rules and laws, spoken and unspoken,

at every turn and corner of our lives, keeping us in check, ensuring that our deepest desires and most exhilarating experiences remain secret and obscene. Building anxieties inside of us, so we have to look over our shoulders every time we feel an itch in our groins, with their churches and their ministries always watching and listening to every word we utter, lest we let slip some heresy or other that might challenge their grip on our lives. *(he sobs)* I hate them so much. Oh, you have no comprehension. The beauty and the grandeur of life that we, all of us, so many of us, keep missing out on every single day of our lives because we are not free to explore and embrace our inner truth. All of us are caged in shame and fear... They'll come for me someday, I know it! They would love to put me away, they'll put me away, lock me up, deny me my liberty, my ecstasies...

DONATIEN falls despondent, drinking more wine. JEANNE comes to his aid soothingly, doing what she does best, and sits on his lap at the table, baring her breasts for him.

JEANNE: Don't be like that,
Donatien. Don't let them get to you.
Here, allow me to soothe your woes.
Take a breast in your mouth, you know
you want it.

DONATIEN starts sucking a breast whilst JEANNE lowers her hand towards his groin and caresses him. But after a few seconds, he pushes her away.

DONATIEN: I had tits for breakfast
today already. I've been sodomized for
lunch and for dinner I fed a couple of
street boys my seed. They were so
eager; it must have been their only
meal of the day. This, my dear, this is
something special, this is my midnight
feast! And it's time I explain myself
better.

DONATIEN takes the dish of fruits out and pours more wine and more water.

JEANNE: I think I've had
 enough, thank you.

DONATIEN: Eat a grape! Here's
 some cheese. Drink! Wine, water,
 whatever you fancy, but imbibe, my
 dear! I brought you here to imbibe, this
 is one of the things I'm paying you for,
 easy work, no? To get paid to be seen
 drinking a cup of water? Drink up!

JEANNE: (*as she drinks*) Since you
 put it like that...

DONATIEN: You said people aren't
 necessarily good or evil. You said they
 are simply struggling against their
 desires and for this you also believe
 that your God is merciful. So,
 according to you, given the right
 circumstances, everyone can be made
 to do an evil deed and even then, no
 matter how evil, they may still be

forgiven. Am I correct in summarizing you so?

JEANNE: Yes. More or less.

DONATIEN: I say you are wrong. I say there's something more essential to our nature and you simply discover who you are, you discover whether you are an innocent soul who suffers this life, suffers through all its trials, suffers at the hands of others and suffers even when you must inflict pain onto others. Yet people are born with a penchant for cruelty, they enjoy inflicting pain, they would not miss an opportunity to do so, to exploit and harass and abuse at will to their own pleasure and advantage. No matter what life throws at them or who they meet, unlike the innocent soul, the one that would treat all opportunities with kindness and generosity, the cruel soul would only seek ways to maximize its own gratification. In your view, people

are born with the potential for both good and evil, like a canvas ready to take all sorts of colors, circumstances would push them into, say, a bluish character or a red one. I say no, that's not how it works. Some of us are born already leaning towards evil and some are more innocent than others to begin with, the circumstances only reveal the truth but do not determine it. Life gives us opportunities to act, and by acting we show who we truly are underneath. Tonight, we shall find out which one of us is right and what kind of person it is that you are.

JEANNE: How?

DONATIEN: I'm going to ask you to perform a small task, a little deed. I will be demanding this of you; you will not be doing this out of your own volition at all. I'm paying you to do this. This is an obligatory request. Now, if you are truly so pragmatic and you truly

believe your god to be so merciful, then you should have no difficulty in performing this deed, because you know it is not by choice, you know I'm forcing you. The struggle is entirely useless. You may perform this deed and, in the eyes of your god, remain forgiven. You will perform with neither much pleasure nor much pain. You will simply execute my order, hence confirming that your nature leans to no one side and these circumstances have simply pushed you to perform without much consequence.

JEANNE: Yes, I shall simply do what I have to do to survive. That wouldn't make me an evil or good person, it simply makes me someone who needs to perform certain acts in life because these are my circumstances in this world, a world which I have not created and I need to survive in.

Whatever it is that you shall ask me to do, I will have to do it. And yes, God—

DONATIEN: If there is a god.

JEANNE: If there is a god, God, I pray, will understand.

DONATIEN: Exactly! On the other hand, I do not believe that it will be so easy, because if I am right, and inside of you there is embedded a very clear penchant for cruelty or some shred of innocence, your experience will be wholly different, far removed from the rational, utilitarian description you just gave. You will either perform this act with wanton pleasure and exhilaration, thus releasing your cruel nature for me to witness; or you will perform it with extreme suffering, thus exhibiting your innocence. This experiment shall prove all of this about you once and for all, to my immense gratification.

JEANNE: (as she sips more wine)

Tell me then, what is it that you will
have me perform?

DONATIEN goes to the door, offstage left, and locks it. He pockets his key. Then he walks across to the right of the room and pulls off one of the velvet covers, revealing an array of instruments displayed on a podium, of sorts. The instruments include a whip, knives and large red candles. On the floor at the foot of the podium lies a medium-sized, wooden crucifix. He picks up the crucifix and shows it to JEANNE.

DONATIEN: Simple. Here is your
Lord, your good boy Jesus on his cross.
Your dead god. What I'm paying you
to do tonight is to stand upon Him and
urinate on His face for my amusement.

JEANNE lowers the wine glass, looks at the food and water on the table, looks at the instruments on the podium and looks again at DONATIEN. Her face aghast.

JEANNE: That is blasphemy.

DONATIEN: So?

JEANNE: People get burned
 alive at the stake for committing such
 crimes.

DONATIEN: Your secret would be
 very safe with me, do not worry. I have
 done far worse myself.

*JEANNE downs the rest of the wine in her glass as
DONATIEN waits.*

JEANNE: Fine. Put it on the floor.

DONATIEN: There it is. Lower
 yourself on it and relieve yourself.
 That's all.

*DONATIEN puts the crucifix on the floor as
JEANNE lifts up her skirt and holds it by her waist.
She walks towards the crucifix and squats on it.
DONATIEN watches intently, but nothing
happens. JEANNE looks down at the crucifix
underneath her, lets her skirt drop and moves away.
She goes to the front door and finds it locked.*

DONATIEN: What is wrong?

JEANNE: Take your money back, I
 don't want it. And let me out.

DONATIEN: To urinate on a piece of
 wood is a very simple act, why can't
 you do it?

JEANNE: That is not what you're
 asking, and you know it!

DONATIEN: But it is! I'm simply
 asking you to urinate on a piece of
 wood and since you have no choice, it
 should be very easy for you to simply
 do it, take your money and leave, no?

JEANNE: You are asking me to
 commit blasphemy! Sacrilege!

DONATIEN: Those are nothing but
 words people made up to control you.
 I'm setting you free. Come, show me
 how free you are.

JEANNE: No, this I can't, this
 won't be. Let me out. Now.

DONATIEN: Too late, my dear. This
 is a night you may not walk away
 from.

JEANNE bangs on the door to no avail.

JEANNE: Someone please help!

DONATIEN: Help with what?
 Nobody cares. You may bang there all
 night or you may simply walk over
 here, take a little piss and walk back
 out in five minutes flat.

JEANNE: I've done a lot of things
 in my shitty life. I've been twisted and
 turned in ways I wish I had never
 known, and I survived, I lived. But not
 this. There is such a thing as lines that
 cannot be crossed. This is wrong. My
 whole being is repulsed by this. I don't
 think I could do it, no matter how hard
 I willed it. What you are asking me to

do is repugnant to every inch of my being. Please, take your money and let me go. I will never do this. We're done. You win.

DONATIEN: Oh no, we're not done at all. I told you, this will either end in pleasure or pain, you leaving the deed undone is not an option. If you won't do what I ask of you, I will make you do it. And I will take great pleasure in convincing you.

JEANNE turns back to banging on the door screaming for help. DONATIEN removes the remaining velvet covers to reveal a small stool, ropes and a pistol. He picks up the pistol and points it at JEANNE, who turns and faces him in terror.

DONATIEN: To tell you the honest truth, my dear Madame Jeanne Testard (*he cocks the pistol*), I was hoping you'd resist.

JEANNE lifts both her arms and covers her eyes in horror with a scream.

FADE TO BLACK

CLOSE BLACK CURTAIN

Erik Satie's Gnossienne No. 2 starts playing. In the dark, a few seconds later, we hear whipping and screams with every lash over the sound of the music. JEANNE screaming "please don't" and "please let me go" intermittently with the lashings. Every once in a while, we hear DONATIEN ordering her to urinate with phrases such as "release yourself!" or "empty your bladder!" JEANNE always replies "no, no, not that, no, please God, no!" All of this happens in the dark over the music with the black curtain closed. Then the screaming and the lashings stop and there's quiet. The music fades to silence.

OPEN BLACK CURTAIN

The romantic dinner table setting is now covered in red velvet and pushed further to the left, creating more space in the center. JEANNE is displayed center stage as follows: she is kneeling, legs apart, on a low footstool with both her legs tied to each end of the stool. Two ropes are coming down from rafters of the apartment, and each arm is pulled up and tied at

the wrist like at a crucifixion. She is naked and we can see a number of bleeding cuts on her thighs, breasts and arms. Her hair is undone, falling in front of her face. The crucifix lies on the footstool, between her legs, right at the center. Bloodied knives, a whip and half-burnt, thick, red candles lie on the floor in front of her. DONATIEN is seated on the floor, his back against the dinner table with two empty bottles of wine lying beside him. He is half-naked, without his shirt and wig, and asleep. Birds can be heard chirping in the early morning hours. After a few seconds of quiet, DONATIEN moves; he reaches for his face and rubs his eyes. Then, a sudden panic takes hold of him. He crawls very quickly to JEANNE, touches the crucifix and then rubs lightly her genitals. Suddenly, he's elated.

DONATIEN: It's dry! Oh good fortune, it's still dry! Never has a dry pussy given such pleasure to a man! For a second there, the most horrid thought ran through my mind: what if you had done it whilst I wasn't watching? What if I had missed it? I

would have surely killed you in a fit of rage, my dear. But it was stupid of me to fall asleep, what a waste of sweet time. Last thing I remember is pouring hot candle wax on the wounds of your back and then I think your screams turned to sobs and I must have been slightly bored or the wine took hold of me. But you (*he grabs her face*), I've truly never seen someone like you. The stronger your resistance, the sweeter your suffering and, oh my, there was such suffering to be had last night.

JEANNE spits at his face.

JEANNE: You fuckin' bastard.
The things I'll see done to you once I'm out of these shackles...

DONATIEN: Oooooo, I'm looking forward to it already.

JEANNE: You degenerate piece of shit.

DONATIEN: A degenerate piece of shit? Really? Is this the kind of conversation and activity a degenerate would partake in? Who do you think I am? Tell me, for real, who do you think I am?

JEANNE: You are a monster. You crawled out of a pit from the bowels of hell. Satan himself shat you out into this world because even *he* couldn't stand the sight of you.

DONATIEN: I wish I were that spectacular, my dear. Oh no. If anything, I came out kicking and screaming like everyone else. And the first thing I did is the first thing everyone else does: I caused my mother immeasurable pain. That is who we are. That is what we do first when we come to this world. Immediately, as soon as we see the light of existence, we cause our dearest and nearest immense pain. So no, I

take no special pride in being born. Though I have, indeed, become something special, something others have been incapable of recognizing and fully becoming.

JEANNE: What's so special about another cruel, rich pervert?

DONATIEN: You're close! But allow me to explain. I'm not just ANY cruel, rich pervert. You see, I am the TRUE face of high society! I am the face of all of them, every single one of them, all the kings and queens and lords and bishops and popes, the true face all of them are trying to hide. Unlike the rest of them, I am not ashamed of the truth of my essence. *They* are. And that's what makes them so pathetic, that's why they spend so much time concocting rules and laws and systems to control and harness and rein. Their fear that they will be found out.

JEANNE: And you're not afraid?
You're not a coward? You'd be eaten
alive without your money!

DONATIEN: You are so right. I am
afraid of many things. I'm afraid I'd
have to go to work someday! *Puh!* At
war, I was constantly terrified. I didn't
kill a single soldier, I just hid behind
bushes and trees all the bloody time,
and that's how I made it out alive! That
kind of barbaric courage is for the dull!
What I'm unafraid of is not the traps
and dangers of this society—I'm
terrified of those like everyone else.
What I'm unafraid of is the pure truth.
The truth found in the flesh.

JEANNE: And you didn't find
such truth in the savagery of war?

DONATIEN: There's no poetry in
war my dear, and don't you dare ever
let anyone convince you otherwise.
Boys running around with shit in their

pants looking for some random fuck wearing a different coloured shirt that they are to stab and wound for the sake of some other pathetic fuck living in a palace miles and miles away. You see, wars are part of everything else, this whole machinery that controls our lives. With God, a dead god mind you, right on top. If men and women were truly free from their fears to look inside and accept their nature, there wouldn't be any of this. *(as he lights a red candle with a match and picks it up)* There wouldn't even be any wars.

JEANNE: Because we would just fuck each other to death?

DONATIEN: You say that like it's a bad thing! *(as he cradles a breast in his hand, aiming the candle on top of it, ready to spill the hot wax...)* Hahaha!

JEANNE: What about real poetry? What about theatre and art?

You are a man of the stage yourself, isn't art more truthful than the flesh, which might be deceiving? (*hoping to distract him from the wax play, it works*)

DONATIEN: Finally! An interesting question! Art, my dear, for the most part of it, is the ultimate lie. Nothing but a constant distraction from the truth of the flesh. Art, including and especially theatre, is another weapon of the masters. The crowds walk in and sit there for an hour or two, watching like idiots the celebrities of the day, and they laugh and they cry and they giggle at something naughty and they get terribly excited as someone draws a sword or a pistol and then...nothing. They leave the hall and go back to their pathetic, boring lives feeling satisfied with the petty excitement they had at the arthouse! Dullards! Not at my shows, of course. My writing is something else...

DONATIEN picks up the crucifix and puts it in front of her face.

DONATIEN: Because he is! Look!
Even our own religion tells us so! He's
nailed to a piece of wood! You can see
it everywhere you go! You celebrate it!
God became one of us, we tortured and
killed Him. And there is nothing left
upstairs! Everything else has been
made up to keep controlling the
people, to keep them believing in
something, to keep them afraid of
something. The rest is a fairy tale! He
came back and flew up into the sky!
Pah! No, He didn't, and even if He did,
guess what? It only means He
abandoned us a second time!

JEANNE: To come back! He left
so that we would wait for Him to come
back. There has to be a final judgment.

DONATIEN: That's just leftovers!
Another ruse to try and placate the

Jews and what's left of their sentiments in our own culture. It's the Jews who adore waiting for something. Let them wait! Let them wait for their Messiah and their Promised Land. And they should keep waiting because the day they *stop* waiting, they, too, will become monsters like the rest of us. No, there is no waiting. There is no god and we are finally free. Only a simpleton believes otherwise. Are you a simpleton, Jeanne? Really? Are you?

JEANNE: I believe in Jesus. That's why I won't do what you ask of me. Jesus suffered. I respect His suffering. I won't desecrate His effigy. Anything but that.

DONATIEN: Then that's the one thing you'll have to do to prove your freedom! Break the curse of reverence. Suffer the ultimate suffering as what you hold dear breaks inside of you. And live a life fully conscious of your

truth. If there is a God, He is only there
so we may spit at Him!

DONATIEN spits at the crucifix.

JEANNE: Have you truly no
shame? What if He does come back? If
you break me and make me do this, I
do believe I shall be forgiven, but what
about you? What will you do when
you come face to face with God?

DONATIEN: I will look Him in the
face and say, "No, I don't believe in
you." Then I will give Him my back
and walk away like I've done for my
whole life because that is the only true
freedom there is. Freedom from God.
That is the very story of our
civilization; the story of how to become
free from God, free to play out our own
fate. Not out of obedience or fear or
shame, but out of our own perverted
ingenuity. I live in the cruel beating
heart of our grandest narrative, the

black heart whose existence everyone wants to deny. And if you don't open your eyes, people like you will forever be nothing but playthings in the hands of people like me. If you still believe in God, you're not even fully human yet!

JEANNE: You're insane! You should be locked up! Someone has to find out about you and lock you up!

DONATIEN: Maybe so, but I've seen the future in my dreams and I'm still here and also there, I'm everywhere, my dear. I've seen faces in my dreams, faces across time, the face of all those that will come to bear this same understanding, the face of all those that will know that they are free to desecrate the corpse of God with impunity. I'm not only the face of this century, I'm even more so the face of the next, and the one after that, the nineteenth, the twentieth, the twenty-first; this world will not end unless I

end, unless we end! For it is us, the cruel, perverted masters of the universe that have built this world, and the less ashamed we are of our perversity, the more shall we rule it until there is nothing left to rule! Everything shall be sacrificed for our gratification, the Earth itself—the skies, the oceans, every single tree, beast and innocent babe in existence shall be sacrificed for us to prove and live out our freedom; and you shall be sacrificed too!

JEANNE: No! This is not the truth!

DONATIEN: I know a bishop, a bishop! A supposedly holy man who took his altar boys at night to a chapel. One at a time, everyone got his turn, and after he consecrates the wine and the holy wafer, he sodomizes his young assistants on the altar right in front of the so-called body and blood of

Christ. But he holds his own ejaculation up until the crucial moment where he shouts a signal to the boy, who, after meticulous instruction and rehearsal, quickly douses his naked self in consecrated wine, places the holy wafer in his open mouth, right on his extended tongue, kneels in front of the bishop for him to powerfully shower the boy—wine, wafer and all that is holy and unholy—in hot seed all at once. Until he bested himself one day by also cutting the boy's throat to add some real blood to the ritual, which of course resulted in an absolute mess that couldn't be as easily cleaned up as usual, so the bishop had to be sent elsewhere, hidden in another corner of the world where he surely may continue his more creative indulgences unobstructed. Blasphemy, you say! But it's blasphemy only for YOU. For the bishop, it's power! And they all know

it. All of them know it. That it's all just a ruse, whether it is the laws of gods or the laws of our institutions, those on top are all aware of the very same thing—it is all there just for their pleasure. Bishop, judge, king, minister, all there to keep you in your small, pathetic box of a so-called civilized life whilst they enjoy their ecstasies in the freedoms their powers afford them.

JEANNE: It can't be so cynical.
The world can't be so evil.

DONATIEN: Yes it is! Wake up! You are nothing but a pawn if you believe yourself to be innocent! I'm giving you an opportunity to free yourself simply by looking at this crucifix and seeing for the first time in your life that it is only a piece of wood. There is no god here, just a piece of wood. Unless you want to remain an innocent, a pawn. In which case you may find meaning in being a pawn still. You shall find

purpose as nothing but a body put upon this world for our pleasure! That is the only purpose of the innocent, to be victims. Do you want to live your entire life as a victim?

JEANNE: No!

DONATIEN: Release yourself then!
Empty yourself on the corpse of God!
Say farewell to His dominance! Say
farewell to His omnipotence! Turn God
into nothing more than another piece
of wood. Find your true freedom, my
dear! And I shall release you!

JEANNE: Release me! Oh God,
please release me!

DONATIEN: Release yourself and I,
your one true saviour, shall see to your
freedom! Not only shall I free your
body, but I shall also free your mind!

DONATIEN kneels in front of her, takes out his now excited member and starts stroking himself savagely.

JEANNE: Please, forgive me,
 Lord! Oh God, please forgive me!

DONATIEN: A piece of wood! It is
 nothing but a piece of wood!

JEANNE: A piece of wood! It is
 nothing but a piece of wood! Aaaaah!

JEANNE screams as the urine bursts out of her in a hot shower all over the cross and DONATIEN has a loud and seemingly painful orgasm.

A moment of respite. JEANNE sobs, DONATIEN groans, church bells can be heard ringing in the distance.

DONATIEN tucks his member back in his pants and immediately crawls up to JEANNE, to unshackle her and release her from her trappings as he kisses and caresses her fondly.

DONATIEN: My dear! Thank you,
 my dear! There's no other like you! No
 other like you, my dear! You did so
 well! Brilliant! Just brilliant! This was
 surely one of the very best nights of my
 life so far!

JEANNE: Where are my clothes?

*DONATIEN brings her the clothes and her coat.
She doesn't bother to put on her skirt and corset, just
her coat, which is enough to hide her naked body.
DONATIEN unlocks the door for her. She takes the
pouch of money he handed her earlier and drops it
on the floor.*

JEANNE: Keep your filthy
 money.

DONATIEN: Why? You deserve it!
 You did a great job! You're not
 satisfied? You want revenge? Here,
 whip me! Take your anger out on my
 ass!

DONATIEN hands her the whip and lowers his pants, giving her his ass.

JEANNE: Being an adult woman who has lived so much of her life on the streets, I thought that I knew what degradation and indignity were, but you showed me otherwise.

DONATIEN: I showed you freedom and truth and ecstasy! I showed you who you really are!

JEANNE: But I neither asked for nor agreed to any of that. We agreed you'd give me money, and I would provide you with physical pleasure. That's all I consented to. I did not consent to performing blasphemy. The freeing of my mind had nothing to do with our agreement.

DONATIEN: Didn't I give you something better? I lifted your veil, gave you a new light to see this

despicable world in. You'd rather have stayed blind?

JEANNE doesn't reply. She throws him his whip, and he catches it, confused.

JEANNE: Whip yourself if you want. I'm doing what must be done. I'm going to tell them everything about you, and I'm going to make sure you are locked up. Are you hearing me, Marquis de Sade? By tonight, you'll be rotting in jail. Enjoy the little freedom you have left.

DONATIEN: So be it! Just remember this, I did not make you who you are, I merely revealed it to you! So don't you dare begrudge me for your own self-disgust!

JEANNE spits on the floor at DONATIEN's feet and exits stage left.

DONATIEN is left on his knees, centre stage, still half-naked with the whip in his hands.

DONATIEN: Of course they'll want to lock me up. I know the truth. I *am* the truth. They can't stand it when someone puts a mirror up to their face and shows them the disgusting truth hidden behind their so-called civilization. So let them, let them lock me up. (*he starts to whip himself*) Nobody locks them up for their wars and massacres. Nobody locks them up for the children they starve and work to death. Nobody locks them up for holding all of society in a grip of fear and shame. They can be as powerful as they want, hiding behind their machinery, with their insipid authority built on lies because nobody locks you up for lying from a stage. Nobody locks up a hypocrite. But me? ME? Oh Monsieur de Sade is disgusting! Monsieur de Sade is scandalous! Monsieur de Sade is extreme and outrageous! This is not the truth, they say! This is filth! This is garbage! This is not philosophy! This is

not literature! Monsieur de Sade should be locked up! But if I can't show them with my life, I'll show them with my writing. I'll write it all down behind bars if needs be. They will lock me up, but they won't stop me. I'll show them their true selves, and I'll show it to their children and their children's children. So fine, fine then, lock me up! I'll go without resistance! Let them come! (*he laughs at the phrase as he whips himself*) Exactly, let them come! Hahaha! Let them come! Let them come! Hahahaha! Let them come!

Erik Satie's Gnossienne No. 3 starts to play as the light fades out. DONATIEN is still whipping himself and laughing and screaming "let them come!"

CLOSE CURTAINS

END OF PART ONE

Prologue to Part Two

The house lights are still on, the red curtain is open and the black curtain is closed, keeping the set out of sight. The same male-identifying actor (M) and female-identifying actor (F) from Part One are onstage again in front of the black curtain. This time though, F is in full corpse monster makeup. She has a terrible scar with visible stitches across her face, though her hair is long and beautiful. Across her torso, she has bandages, but there's a large bloodstain that can be seen through them on her abdomen. M is helping her with the final touches of makeup and prosthetics throughout the following introduction. He is more or less in the same costume from Part One. They address the audience as they are getting ready.

M: Welcome back!

F: Hello again! I hope we didn't lose too many of you during that little break, but no worries if we did!

M: True! We are aware that not everyone might have the stomach for what we're presenting here, yet that's how we like it!

F: There's already too much safe stuff in theater and movies and TV. Everyone is constantly tempted, urged even, to follow formulas for success, making artists so afraid of failure. Afraid of displeasing someone or scaring them away or not getting enough attention!

M: As you might have noticed already, we don't really care about all that here and failure is a risk we are willing to take. That's what makes it all exciting! If we knew this was going to work, we wouldn't even try it out!

F: And here's the real risk of tonight: putting together two stories with completely different contexts,

side by side, to find echoes inside of them that connect them in unprecedented ways.

M: In *Part One*, we saw the horrible, albeit historical, night between Donatien de Sade and Madame Testard play out. Now we're going into science fiction territory, within the context of the horror novel written by Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

F: As you can see from all this makeup, I shall be portraying the monster! A humanoid creature made from an assembly of corpses brought to life by the visionary scientist Victor Frankenstein.

M: And I shall be playing the scientist. Though there will be no "it's alive!" tonight, since we're

focusing on a very specific moment of the original tale.

F: The scene in question is the night Victor and the monster spent together in a hut on a mountain near Geneva in the region of Mont Blanc. Many of you might not remember this part of the story because most movie adaptations of the novel keep this whole part out and reduce it to a small scene, usually in a cave underneath the ice, where the monster recalls the tale of meeting the blind old man.

M: In truth, there's more to it than that, and Mary Shelley has dedicated six whole chapters to the tale told by the monster that night. The monster takes Victor in his small shelter and tells a long tale of how he became acquainted with his own nature and that of human beings. Though, as per the structure of the

novel, what we have is only what Victor could have reported.

F: And so, we're wondering, what if more was said that evening? What if the monster spoke of things Victor couldn't even comprehend, let alone report back?

M: What if the monster did things to Victor that Victor didn't want shared?

F: Here, the novel gives us a beautiful opportunity we shall be exploiting tonight, where we may not only explore better the monster's tale as found in those six central chapters of Shelley's novel, but to also imagine a conversation that may have gone beyond what ultimately reached us.

By now, M should be helping F put on a long, black trench coat, with both of them ready in full

costume. The red curtain closes and they step in front of it to conclude the prologue to Part Two.

F: Dear audience, thank you for staying with us and joining us in this creative literary experiment.

M: May we take this opportunity to warn you once again that there shall be horrible things said and done on stage in the following representation.

F: Things which, hopefully, will give you not only food for thought, but also ample opportunities for discussion once this performance is over. It's time we all face the horror. Ladies and gentlemen, we present to you Anton Bonnici's *Corpus Dei Part Two – Return of the Corpse of God*.

They enter behind the curtain. House lights off.

Part Two:
Return of the
Corpse of God
a.k.a. The Monster's Tale

A conversation between Dr. Victor
Frankenstein & the Unnamed Monster
circa August 1794 on the territories
of Mont Blanc

A retelling of select chapters from
Mary Shelley's novel,
FRANKENSTEIN

Open curtain. A spot on a humanoid MONSTER in a coat, their face not fully visible, covered in bandages, lying on the floor in the darkness. Erik Satie's Gnossienne No. 1 plays to the still moment as the MONSTER remains still until it starts to breathe heavily. Long, deep, heavy breaths. As the MONSTER turns about in the spot of light like an awakening creature, the music fades to silence. The MONSTER speaks as they wake, fumbling in the dark.

MONSTER: It is with difficulty that I recall the beginning of my existence; the events of that time are confused. A strange flood of sensations overwhelmed me, and I saw, felt, heard and smelled all at once. Over time, I began to distinguish between these senses. A stronger light soon pressed on my nerves, forcing me to close my eyes. Darkness followed, but upon opening my eyes again, the light returned. I walked, noting a change in my surroundings. Previously, dark bodies

blocked my path, but now I could move freely. The light and heat became oppressive, so I sought shade in what later I learned was a forest near Ingolstadt. There, I rested by a brook, eating berries and drinking from the stream. Eventually, sleep overtook me. Upon waking in darkness, I felt cold and frightened, realizing my desolation. Before leaving your room, I had covered myself, but the clothes weren't enough to protect me from the night's chill. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing. But feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.

The MONSTER takes a somber moment, as if reliving these last few words before they try to continue their story, and is immediately interrupted.

MONSTER: Soon, a gentle light stole over
 the heavens and gave me a sensation
 of—

VOICE: Wait, sorry, wait a second...I
 have a question...what do you mean
 “wept”?

*The MONSTER is disturbed by the interruption
and the stage lights come on. Onstage, we seem to
be inside a small, modest hut. There's a table and
two chairs. The MONSTER is on the floor
downstage; the table with the chairs is upstage right.
A well-dressed man is seated at the table, he's the one
that asked the question.*

MONSTER: Wept, I wept, what can't you
 understand?

VICTOR: Like, tears came out of your
 eyes?

MONSTER: I wept! I felt the anguish and
 the misery of my whole being overtake
 my senses and I wept!

VICTOR: So, you started feeling things,
 you have feelings and emotions and
 are moved to tears by these emotions?

MONSTER: Yes, I have feelings. Why is it so
 surprising that I have feelings?

VICTOR: I thought that considering
 what you are...

MONSTER: What I am? You think you
 know what I am?

VICTOR: Well, since I was the one
 who...

MONSTER: Who what? Who made me? Is
 that what you think?

VICTOR: You are the result of my work.

MONSTER: The result of *your* work? (*the
MONSTER laughs mockingly*) Let me
 tell you my story, Victor Frankenstein.
 And maybe, if you listen, you might
 get to understand what made me and

maybe, just maybe, you'll even figure out who I am.

VICTOR: Whether I understand or not doesn't mean a thing. I will never forgive you for what you've done.

MONSTER: I'm not here to beg for forgiveness. I'm here only to speak. Just like all those that came before me. All those that one day looked up from the darkness and were moved by a vast sky covered in stars. The radiant, soothing disc compelled them to howl and raise their voices at the very injustice of mere being. But back to more practical matters. For a long time, the moon guided me, moving slowly but lighting my path as I searched for berries. I found a cloak to shield myself from the cold, though my thoughts were still confused. I was overwhelmed by sensations of light, hunger and various sounds. Gradually, I began to observe the

world more clearly—the stream, trees, and birds. Though I tried to imitate their songs, I failed. As my mind grew sharper, I distinguished different animals and plants.

One day, I found a fire left by beggars and delighted in its warmth. I burned my hand in my excitement, marveling at how the same fire could cause pleasure and pain. A concept I would later come back to explore in much more depth...but back then, I seemed to know so little. I experimented with drying wet wood to maintain the fire, which gave both heat and light. I also discovered how fire improved my food.

When food became scarce, I left the forest, coming across a snow-covered landscape. Desperate for shelter, I found a small hut where an old man fled upon seeing me. But I was enchanted by the appearance of the

hut; here the snow and rain could not penetrate; the ground was dry. And it presented to me then as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandemonium appeared to the demons of hell after their sufferings in the lake of fire. I greedily devoured the remnants of the shepherd's breakfast, which consisted of bread, cheese, milk and wine; the latter, however, I did not like. Then, overcome by fatigue, I lay down among some straw and fell asleep.

VICTOR: Sorry, did you say you don't like wine?

MONSTER: Yes. I did not like it. Maybe because I found it there, in that hut, all alone. Maybe if I had tried it with a merry band of companions amidst the sounds and sights of laughter and conviviality, maybe there, yes, I could have enjoyed it like most of you do. Anyway...

VICTOR: And...sorry for interrupting again, a second question. Pandemonium? And demons? How do you know about all this?

MONSTER: I have visions from hell; Satan himself appears to me every night to tell me his devilish plans.

VICTOR: What? Satan talks to you, you said?

The MONSTER laughs loudly.

MONSTER: No! You gullible fool. I read about them in books.

VICTOR: Books? You read?

MONSTER: I don't know what perturbs you the most...the possibility that I converse with demons or my ability to read. Yes, I read. If you let me go on with my story, maybe we'll get there.

VICTOR: I apologize, please continue.

MONSTER: I awoke at noon, warmed by the sun and decided to resume my journey. Taking the remains of the peasant's meal, I crossed fields until reaching a village by sunset. The sight of the cottages and stately houses astonished me, and the food displayed at windows tempted my hunger. However, upon entering one cottage, the villagers attacked me, and I fled, bruised and terrified, to a bare hovel. This miserable shelter was attached to a neat cottage, though I dared not enter it. Despite its wretchedness, the hovel protected me from the elements, and I covered its crevices to hide myself.

In the morning, I ventured out to examine the cottage. It was close to a pigsty and a pool of water, providing some shelter. I fortified my hovel with stones and wood and secured food and water for the day. The hovel, though humble, felt like paradise compared to

my former forest home. While observing the cottage through a small hole, I saw a young girl, modestly dressed and carrying a pail. She appeared sad and weary, but gentle in her demeanor. A young man met her and carried the pail, both showing signs of melancholy.

I continued watching through the opening and glimpsed a small, clean room. Inside, an old man sat disconsolately by a fire, while the girl busied herself with household tasks. Soon, she sat by the old man, and he began playing music on an instrument, producing sounds sweeter than anything I had ever heard. The sight moved me deeply—his silver hair and kind face, her gentle manners. Overwhelmed by emotions I had never known before, I withdrew from the window, unable to endure the intensity of my feelings.

VICTOR: But these emotions, these strong sensations you feel, where do they come from? Do you feel them originating from somewhere?

MONSTER: What about *your* emotions? When you feel strong sensations, if you do, do you feel them originating from somewhere?

VICTOR: I'm not sure I may answer that question. I feel exhilaration sometimes, intellectual excitement maybe...

MONSTER: Only intellectual excitement? Haven't recent events sent you in a dark and somber stupor out of which you can't seem to lift yourself?

VICTOR: True, recently I have been suffering from a deep melancholy following the events of the past few months, but I was born like this, you see. I was born with feelings, even though I may presume what's inside of me and how I am, I still do not fully

understand myself. You, on the other hand, I made you. Every organ there is inside of you, I put it there after holding it in my own two hands. And none of those organs I thought would lead to such sensations, such emotions. Your heart is merely a machine to circulate blood, your brain is there to coordinate your body and maybe help you calculate and perceive, but such strong emotions, I would have never imagined possible in one such as you.

MONSTER: There it is again, you keep saying "one such as me" as if you know what one such as me is. Just because you had my internal organs in your two hands and placed them in the right order for them to function does not mean you know me. I am alive. And maybe, maybe being alive is always somewhat more than the sum of the parts, and even more than the sum of the processes involved in

bringing said being to life. All I knew was that I was feeling things, strong things, things that moved me, made me groan and hide my face and shy away. I did not have words for these feelings yet; I could not express myself like I'm doing now. I was like a box of firecrackers, full of bangs and hisses and shakes on the inside with no chance for any of that to leave the box and be heard and seen by anyone. I desperately needed words, and I would soon find them.

Shortly after the tender moment between the old man and the girl, the young man returned with wood. The girl helped him, prepared food and they both worked in the garden. After an hour, they ate a simple meal together with the old man, who grew cheerful in their company. The contrast between the elderly man, full of kindness, and the younger man,

graceful but sorrowful, struck me deeply. Later, the youth read aloud, though I didn't understand the words.

That night, I lay sleepless, reflecting on their gentle manners. I longed to join them, but feared rejection after the violence I had faced in the village. I resolved to quietly observe them. The next day, the same routine unfolded—the youth worked outside, the girl tended to the cottage and the old man played music or reflected. Their love and respect for the old man were evident, as they cared for him with tenderness, and he returned their devotion with warm smiles.

VICTOR: Such a happy family.

MONSTER: No, they were not entirely happy. The young man and his companion often went apart and appeared to weep. I saw no cause for their unhappiness, but I was deeply

affected by it. If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes) and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chilly and delicious viands when hungry; they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more, they enjoyed one another's company and speech, interchanging each day with looks of affection and kindness. What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain?

A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty, and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted entirely of the vegetables of their garden and the milk

of one cow, which gave very little during the winter, when its masters could scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers, for several times they placed food before the old man when they reserved none for themselves.

This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption, but when I found that in doing this, I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained and satisfied myself with berries, nuts and roots which I gathered from a neighboring wood.

VICTOR: You mean to say that you suffered hunger so that these people, members of the same race that had screamed at your face and ran away from you in disgust, would *not* suffer?

MONSTER: These gentle folk did me no wrong! How dare I witness their poverty and remain unmoved?

VICTOR: But poverty is everywhere you may lay your eyes. If we were to be moved by poverty all the time, nothing would be achieved in this world. One has to remain stoic. And I cannot see how a brute like yourself could dwell upon such feelings beyond satisfying your hunger and thirst.

MONSTER: Oh, but that's where you are wrong. It is only one such as you, such as your kind, someone that has never experienced true hunger, true thirst, that would remain unmoved. One such as I, who knows what it means to scour the land for scraps and berries cannot remain, as you say, stoic. Not only did I want to ensure that I did not add to their misery, but I felt compelled, without any doubt, to help them survive with every fiber of my

being. So I discovered also another means through which I was able to assist their labors. I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in collecting wood for the family fire, and during the night, I often took his tools, which I quickly learned how to use, and brought home kindling sufficient for the consumption of several days.

I remember, the first time that I did this, the young woman, when she opened the door in the morning, appeared greatly astonished upon seeing a great pile of wood outside. She uttered some words in a loud voice, and the youth joined her, who also expressed surprise. I observed, with pleasure, that he did not go to the forest that day, but spent it in repairing the cottage and cultivating the garden.

By degrees, I made a discovery of a still greater moment. I found that these people possessed a method of

communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers.

VICTOR: Language! You discovered language!

VICTOR starts writing more excitedly in his notebook.

MONSTER: Yes, I eagerly sought to understand the language of the cottagers, but their quick speech and lack of connection to visible objects left me puzzled. Over time, after observing them for several moons, I learned basic words like “fire,” “milk,” “bread” and “wood,” and discovered the names of the cottagers: Agatha, Felix and the old man, who they called “Father.” I felt immense joy when I grasped the

meaning of these sounds and was able to pronounce them.

During the winter, I grew deeply attached to the cottagers. Their happiness brought me joy, and their sadness weighed on me. I noticed how the old man often comforted Agatha and Felix, though Felix remained the saddest. Despite his sorrow, Felix showed great kindness, like clearing snow for Agatha and replenishing their firewood—though he never knew it was me who secretly helped. He often worked for a farmer or in the garden, but in the cold months, he read to the old man and Agatha, enriching their humble lives.

VICTOR: So, though poor, they were educated enough to know how to read?

MONSTER: Why is that surprising?

VICTOR: Because, for many factors, one would assume that people living in poverty have never had access to such things as books, nor the necessary education to learn how to read. Yet these simple cottagers you have met, who are so far simple farmers, possess books and are able to read. This is indeed surprising.

MONSTER: Surprising only if you are quick to judgement and prejudice. Once more, you seem to betray your nature. You say you are a man of science, a man of observation and critical faculty, but here you are, once again, jumping to conclusions. You don't know these people. And don't you dare think you do. I was there and I was lucky enough to see and hear them reading. At first, Felix's reading puzzled me greatly, but over time I noticed he used the same sounds while reading as he did in speech. I realized

the signs on the paper represented spoken words, and I longed to understand them. However, without knowing the sounds themselves, it was a challenge. Although I improved in recognizing some of these signs, I still couldn't follow conversations. I knew I must master their language before revealing myself to the cottagers, hoping that this knowledge might help them overlook my hideous appearance.

I had admired the beauty and grace of the cottagers, but when I saw my reflection in a pool, I was horrified. At first, I couldn't believe the image was truly mine, but once I realized that *I* was, indeed, that monstrous figure, I felt overwhelming despair and mortification. Alas, I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. Did you ever consider any of

this when you were, as you said,
“making me”?

VICTOR: I only apprehended how
disfigured you were once you started
breathing.

MONSTER: But before then, you must have
had me on your table, with my organs
in your hands, again, as you yourself
said, right there in front of you. At no
point did you look upon this
disgusting face and think, “No,
nothing, nothing should ever live with
such a deformed visage”?

VICTOR: You have to understand that
whilst making you, it was as if I were
under a spell.

MONSTER: A spell? A man of science
under a spell?!

VICTOR: Yes, that’s the only way, in
hindsight, that’s the only way I may
describe it. It was as if all my faculties

had been taken over by this ambition—no, *desire*—to beat death. See, that's what you were to me, not someone who was going to come to life with feelings and thoughts and desires of your own, but as a solution. An answer to a problem. Whether that answer had a disfigured face or not was never the point. You were my solution to death. I was going to solve death once and for all, so what if you had to be ten feet tall and hideous?

MONSTER: And why was death ever a problem?

VICTOR: What do you mean? Death is the ultimate problem.

MONSTER: But why? There's beauty in death, there's poetry, not to mention the most beautiful thing of all, there's rest. Oh, how I have longed for death already. But you gave me this dastardly body that seems indestructible!

VICTOR: Longing for death is for the depraved and the desperate! We want life!

MONSTER: I am life! Look at the face of life! Is *this* what you want?

VICTOR: That's not what I mean, and you know it.

MONSTER: Of course, but you still don't understand. You see, there are days where I also want more of life. You'll see as I continue. As the snow melted and the days grew warmer, the earth revealed itself, and Felix became busier. Signs of impending famine disappeared as the cottagers' food supply became sufficient, though simple. New plants grew in the garden, bringing daily signs of improvement. The old man, supported by Felix, took daily walks when the weather permitted. My life remained steady: observing the cottagers by day

and collecting food and fuel for them by night, which astonished them when they noticed the mysterious help.

My thoughts grew more focused on understanding their emotions, especially Felix's misery and Agatha's sadness. I believed I might bring them happiness and often dreamed of revealing myself, imagining both their initial disgust and eventual acceptance through my kindness. These hopes encouraged me to continue learning their language, despite my harsh voice.

With spring's arrival, the world transformed; men emerged to work the land, birds sang joyfully and trees began to bud. The beauty of nature uplifted my spirits, filling me with hope and anticipation for a brighter future.

I now hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate events that

impressed me with feelings which, from what I had been then, have made me into what I am today.

VICTOR: So you're saying that today you are not what I made? Others remade you?

MONSTER: Do you truly believe that you are still the same creature your mother brought into this world?

VICTOR: Of course! I was born Victor Frankenstein, and I am Victor Frankenstein to this day.

MONSTER: Would you, for a second, listen to the foolishness of your uttering? You were born Victor Frankenstein? Was that mere babe, suckling at its mother's breast, able to chop limbs off corpses and string them together to challenge death? Or did things happen to that babe, events unfold before that babe's eyes as it grew from age to age into who you today believe is Victor

Frankenstein? Maybe a seed was present, yes, that babe had a seed already in it, but it was the soil of its hearth and the sun and moon of its mother and father and the showers of joy and sorrow that it received day and night which shaped it into the dark tree that stands today. All the things you decided to deprive me of and left to chance.

VICTOR: We are what we are meant to be!

MONSTER: Meant by whom? What higher power?

VICTOR: The human intellect is the highest of powers!

MONSTER: So the human intellect meant for you to be who you are? Is there some higher seat of human intellect that has decreed somewhere, somehow, Victor Frankenstein is meant to challenge death? Or wasn't it your father, the doctor,

who wished for you to also be a doctor? Wasn't it the books in your library that showed you? Wouldn't you have been someone else if your father was a carpenter instead of a doctor? Or if you picked up one book instead of another at a vulnerable age? Meant to be! *Pah!* You're nothing but the result of prolonged happenstance!

VICTOR: There's a logic to your argument, but my whole being is reeling against it. There must be devilry in your words!

MONSTER: Hear yourself! A man of science, yet you would rather resort to words such as "devilry" than accept that your mind's foundations are built on sand. Let me continue my story and take it as evidence for how life is molded from one shape to another.

Spring arrived quickly, transforming the once desolate landscape into a

paradise of flowers and greenery, filling my senses with delight. One day, while the cottagers rested, Felix appeared deeply melancholy. As his father played music, a knock at the door interrupted them. A veiled lady on horseback arrived, speaking Felix's name in a sweet, unfamiliar voice. When she revealed her face, her beauty astonished me—raven hair, gentle dark eyes and a fair complexion. Felix's sorrow vanished instantly, replaced by ecstatic joy. He greeted her with rapture, calling her his "sweet Arabian," and tenderly led her into the cottage.

Though the stranger spoke a distinct language, neither she nor the cottagers understood each other. Hence, I understood that there was more than one language in the world. Despite this, her presence brought joy to the cottage, lifting their spirits as the sun

dispels morning mist. Felix's happiness was evident, and Agatha, ever gentle, kissed the stranger's hands, conveying that Felix had been sorrowful until her arrival. The stranger's attempt to learn their language inspired me to do the same, and I quickly grasped many words.

That night, Felix and his father conversed about the guest, whom they called Safie, and I yearned to understand their discussion, but failed. The days grew peaceful, with Safie's presence replacing sadness in the cottagers' lives. As I advanced in language skills and learned to read, I gained insight from Volney's *The Ruins of Empires*, which Felix used to instruct Safie. This book revealed historical and cultural knowledge, evoking in me mixed feelings about humanity's capacity for both greatness and baseness. My understanding of human

nature deepened, and the violence and vice I learned of left me with a profound sense of revulsion.

VICTOR: This I cannot believe! You, a child murderer, turns away in disgust from violence and vice?

MONSTER: I expected your incredulity and, thus, I am not surprised by your reaction. But back then, I was still not the one that I am today. Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me. While I listened to the instructions which Felix bestowed upon the Arabian, the strange system of human society was explained to me. I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty, of rank, descent and noble blood, the horror of what you call civilization.

The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions

most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these advantages, but without either, he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator, I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist on a coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the Earth, from

which all men fled and whom all men
disowned?

VICTOR: No, that was not what you
 were meant to be. You were meant to
 be a light that cuts down all darkness!

MONSTER: Once again, you use that word
 as if you have some power over it.
 “What you were *meant* to be,” you say.
 Meaning. Ha! What do things mean? Is
 that truly in our power to say? Am I not
 the perfect example of how deluded
 humanity must be to believe itself
 capable of intending and delivering
 meaning?

VICTOR: But that’s exactly who we are!
 We are the ones who intend meaning!
 We are the ones who create and form
 with an intention unlike that of the soil
 and the beasts. And I did have an
 intention when I put you together and
 that intention was noble! Far from
 creating a murderous wretch!

MONSTER: But did you put me together?
Was it only you that put me together?
Or was it something more? What put
you together, Victor? Could it not be
that, just like your society put *you*
together, it also gave rise to the
wretched being that is me? I have
given thought to this, Victor. You have
no comprehension to the hours that I
have passed in contemplation. I cannot
describe to you the agony that these
reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to
dispel them, but sorrow only increased
with knowledge. Oh, that I had forever
remained in my native wood, nor
known nor felt beyond the sensations
of hunger, thirst and heat!

VICTOR: You have found misery in
knowledge?

MONSTER: Of what a strange nature is
knowledge! It clings to the mind when
it has once seized on it like a lichen on
the rock. I wished sometimes to shake

off all thought and feeling, but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death—a state which I feared yet did not understand.

VICTOR: How could you fear death? Did you know enough of life to tremble at the possibility of its extinction?

MONSTER: The fear of death is in the fiber of anything that is living. Even the sparrow and the squirrel fear death. The fear of death is a necessity of life. Life may only be grasped as it walks onwards with that fear right behind, pushing it forwards, whether it is the life of a beast or maybe even a tree. This has nothing to do with knowledge, hence so difficult for you to grasp. Yet knowledge I did not lack.

Other lessons were impressed upon me even more deeply. I heard of the

difference of sexes, and the birth and growth of children, how the father doted on the smiles of the infant, how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapped up in the precious charge, how the mind of youth expanded and gained knowledge, of brother, sister and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.

But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance, I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans.

VICTOR: Memories, you were searching
 for memories of childhood.

MONSTER: A childhood I never had. Did
 you ever consider what it would feel
 like to be a being without a childhood?
 If so, much of our character is pressed
 upon us then, in those early years, then
 what of me? I will soon explain to what
 these feelings tended, but allow me
 now to return to the cottagers, whose
 story excited in me such various
 feelings of indignation, delight, and
 wonder, but which all terminated in
 additional love and reverence.

Over time, I learned the captivating
history of my friends. The old man, De
Lacey, was once affluent in France,
respected and loved. His son, Felix,
was trained for public service and
Agatha was of high social standing.
They lived comfortably in Paris until
Safie's father, a Turkish merchant, fell
afoul of the government. He was

imprisoned and condemned to death on dubious grounds, causing outrage in Paris, as it seemed his religion and wealth, rather than any real crime, led to his sentence.

Felix, witnessing the trial, vowed to rescue the merchant. He discovered a way into the prison and, despite the Turk's offers of a reward, was moved by Safie's gratitude. The Turk promised Safie's hand in marriage if Felix succeeded, a proposal Felix found appealing but did not formally accept. During the escape preparations, Safie expressed her gratitude through letters, which I later read.

Safie's mother, a Christian Arab, had taught her to value intellect and freedom, contrasting sharply with the constraints of her life in Turkey. The Turk's escape was successful, and Felix guided the family through France to

Italy. Safie stayed with her father until he could leave for Turkey, while Felix enjoyed her company, though the Turk secretly planned to separate them.

Alas, as Felix was helping the Turks, the French officials took revenge upon him by arresting his father and sister. This turn of events perplexed me. How could one's own countrymen turn against their kin so easily?

VICTOR: They broke the law. They helped a prisoner escape the country. These are serious crimes!

MONSTER: Yes, that's the excuse, and it always is, isn't it? In all of the histories I have read, it is always the excuse for tyranny. The Law. This cold code that controls everyone's behaviors and expiates them from culpability. A man may put another on the block and torture them to death, and yet it is completely admissible because it

follows the law. Of all the most horrid things humanity has accomplished, the law must be one of the worst.

VICTOR: What nonsense! The law brings order and civilization!

MONSTER: Order? What is the use of order if to the very people this order is supposed to protect does nothing but suffocate their passions and enslave all their impulses to care and to love? There is no heart and no compassion in the law, and hence it can never be truly human. You'll see this soon enough.

News of De Lacey and Agatha's imprisonment in Paris spurred Felix to return to France, where he surrendered himself in a failed attempt to free them. I can't begin to fathom the betrayal that young man endured. Giving himself up to the authorities of his own country, to free his father and sister from their prisons, only to be denied his request

once again! Pure cruelty. The only mercy was that they kept their lives, but alas, they lost everything else. For they were exiled to Germany, where I eventually found them. Hence, this small, poor, miserable family, speaking French in the fringes of the German forests. But Felix's heroic retreat to save his family had even worse consequences! The Turk, Safie's father, feeling betrayed since their protection all the way to Turkey was cut short and his daughter was being wooed by a Christian, left Felix impoverished and sent only a small sum, whilst also abandoning his daughter. Safie, defying her father's orders to return to Turkey, used her resources to find Felix in Germany.

After her attendant's death en route, Safie arrived at the cottage alone without knowledge of the language or customs, but was eventually taken in by the locals and reunited with Felix.

This poignant story of my cottagers revealed their virtues and the deep flaws in human nature, leaving a lasting impression on me.

As yet, I looked upon crime as a distant evil; benevolence and generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed. I became increasingly enamored with the concept of love. It seems to me the only truly human aspect that pulls human beings out of the mire of their pitiful existence. Do you know what that is, Victor? Do you know what love is?

VICTOR: Of course.

MONSTER: Tell me then, what is it?

VICTOR: Well, there are many theories and philosophies of...

MONSTER: Stop rambling and just tell me!
From your so-called human experience,
what is love?

VICTOR: Maybe, it is our ability to be
fond of each other...

MONSTER: Fondness? Is that love? Is it
enough for me to look at a sweet
sparrow and think of how cute the
fragile creature flits about on a tree
branch to know love? I have seen
people give up their entire livelihoods
out of love for one another. What have
you ever done out of love, Victor?

VICTOR: I know what love is! I'm about
to be wed! I love Elizabeth!

MONSTER: So you say, but what have you
done for Elizabeth? How have you
showed her this love of yours?

VICTOR: I'm here, right now, risking my
life in your presence to protect her!

MONSTER: This is why you're here?
Because you love Elizabeth? (*the
MONSTER laughs*) Is that why you
write everything I say down in your
notebook, because you love Elizabeth?
(*laughs even harder*)

VICTOR: This is important, it needs to be
documented!

MONSTER: Important for whom? Elizabeth?
Would she care about what you've
done? Or are you going to hide me
from her for as long as you breathe?

VICTOR: If I hide you from her, it's to
protect her from your hideousness.
She's all kindness and beauty. One
such as her should not be tarnished by
the very thought of one such as you.

MONSTER: Then if you loved her so dearly
and my being is such a risk for her
delicate nature, why bring me into
existence at all? Where was your love
then?

VICTOR: I was still driven by love, but a broken one, a broken heart driving an unbridled mind...I cannot! I cannot stay here! I have to leave!

VICTOR tries to escape, but the MONSTER grabs him and pins him to the floor.

MONSTER: No! Tell me more! You say your heart was broken, what broke your heart?

VICTOR: I can't! Not to you, not to you!

MONSTER: Then to whom? If there was anyone, anything, that could come closer to understanding you Victor, it is me. Tell me, what broke your heart?

VICTOR: My mother. The death of my mother broke my heart. Now let me go! I've had enough!

The MONSTER releases him.

MONSTER: Ooo your mother, of course. Who died giving birth to your brother.

But why is that so heartbreaking? Isn't that the nature of life? One expires for the next to fill the void, no?

VICTOR breaks down sobbing.

VICTOR: No, no, that should not be life at all. That's not justice. That's not fair.

MONSTER: And why should you say what justice is? What fairness is? Who are you to make such claims?

VICTOR: I can't listen to this anymore! I have to leave!

VICTOR tries to leave, but the MONSTER comes between him and the door.

MONSTER: You shall stay and listen, you shall hear my entire tale, every single detail of the journey that brings me to this moment here, that brings us together here, tonight. For the entirety of the future rests on whether you leave this abode transformed or not!

VICTOR resists, tries to run again. The MONSTER grabs him and throws him on the table.

VICTOR: The more I'm in your presence,
 the cloudier is my mind. I cannot bear
 it. I have to leave!

The MONSTER lifts VICTOR off the table and throws him to the floor. VICTOR loses consciousness and falls limp.

MONSTER: Once again, Victor Frankenstein,
 you leave me no choice.

FADE TO BLACK

CLOSE BLACK CURTAIN

Erik Satie's Gnossienne No. 2 starts playing. In the dark, a few seconds later, we hear whipping and screams with every lash over the sound of the music. VICTOR screaming "please don't" and "please let me go" intermittently between the lashings. Every once in a while, we hear the MONSTER say "listen, you will listen!" VICTOR always replies "no, no, not that, no, please no!" All of this happens in the dark over the music with the black curtain closed.

Then the screaming and the lashings stop and there's quiet. The music fades to silence.

OPEN BLACK CURTAIN

VICTOR is now tied, half-naked, to a chair in reverse. His hands are bound in front to the backrest of the chair, his legs are tied to the side against the chair's legs and his own back is exposed, bloodied with whip marks. The MONSTER is seated on a chair right in front of him, holding the whip.

MONSTER: I did not fully wish it to come to this. A part of me is still averse to violence. But a different part relishes every scream that I induce in others. Where did this pleasure come from? It wasn't always there, Victor, no, not at the beginning. It was kindled inside of me, or maybe it was shown to me. Once again, like a seed, already buried, and someday a beam of light fell onto that otherwise neglected spot to sprout this new branch of pleasure. Now, are you aware of what I am capable of?

VICTOR: Yes, yes I am.

MONSTER: Have you understood what your only way out of this place is?

VICTOR: Yes, I have to listen, I have to listen.

MONSTER: Good. Then I may continue with my account of the progress of my intellect. I must not omit a circumstance which occurred in the beginning of the month of August of the same year.

One night, while foraging in the woods, I discovered a leather portmanteau containing clothes and books. Returning to my hovel with this find, I was thrilled to discover that the books were in the language I had learned from the cottagers. They included *Paradise Lost*, a volume of Plutarch's *Lives*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and an anonymous manuscript entitled *Justine*.

These books were a source of immense joy and enlightenment. They introduced me to a range of new images and emotions, often lifting me to ecstasy, but equally plunging me into deep despondency. *The Sorrows of Young Werther* particularly captivated me with its poignant narrative and its exploration of complex ideas that had previously been obscure to me. The book's portrayal of domestic life and profound sentiments resonated with my experiences and unfulfilled needs. Werther, in particular, appeared to me as a divine figure, genuine and of deep character. The book's reflections on death and suicide intrigued and bewildered me.

I did not pretend to enter into the merits of the case, yet I inclined towards the opinions of the hero, whose extinction I wept, without precisely understanding it. Have you

ever read it, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*?

VICTOR: I'm not a very big fan of fiction.

MONSTER: To be expected. Maybe that is the reason you are unable to explain what truly drives you.

VICTOR: I know what drives me! Curiosity! Intellectual ambition! Science!

MONSTER: Of course, I'm sure this is true. But what emotions underneath your intellectual façade feed these drives? In other words, you are passionate about science, so what feeds the passion?

VICTOR is speechless.

MONSTER: See, you are unable to articulate that which your philosophy hasn't defined already. I, on the other hand, have found words to describe these fires inside of me. As I read, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself

similar, yet at the same time, strangely unlike the beings I read about and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none and related to none. The path of my departure was free, and there was none to lament my annihilation. My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? From whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them.

The volume of Plutarch's *Lives* I found detailed the founders of ancient republics and also had a profound impact on me, distinct from the influence of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. While Werther's melancholic themes deepened my gloom, Plutarch's accounts lifted me beyond

my personal despair, inspiring both admiration and disgust for historical heroes. The book introduced me to grand concepts of kingdoms, rivers and seas, far surpassing my limited experience with human nature, which had been confined to the cottage. I read of people involved in governance and conflict, which ignited within me a strong passion for virtue and a distaste for vice, although my understanding of these terms was still developing. I found myself drawn to peaceable lawgivers like Numa, Solon and Lycurgus, contrasting sharply with my disturbing admiration for the more martial figures, such as Romulus and Theseus. The tranquil lives of my protectors likely shaped these impressions, differing from what might have arisen from an introduction to humanity through tales of glory and conquest. Maybe

such a book would be of more interest to you, no?

VICTOR: A long time ago, my tutors made me read it, but I found it terribly boring. I'm not interested in the past. For me, it is all a singular story. The fortunate and the strong rise and destroy. The unfortunate and the weak fall and die. Only scientific innovation breaks the monotony and propels humanity towards something truly magnificent.

MONSTER: Again, we disagree. Isn't there something to be said in the organization of mankind? In the ways people have come together to protect each other and make a future for their young? The horror always lies in those that desire power. The ones that want to build taller towers and conquer their neighbours. I find ambitious men more disgusting than Satan himself. The protagonist of one of my favourite

tomes. *Paradise Lost* excited different and far deeper passions. I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred to several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God, a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature, but I was wretched, helpless and alone. Many times, I considered Satan as the more apropos emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss

of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy
rose within me.

VICTOR: So you know envy as well...

MONSTER: Yes, envy, I envy and I covet all
that others have and was denied to me.
Companionship, happiness, comfort,
safety, respect, power...love. Why not
me? The only thing I could think of
was, because of my ugliness. That's
why. The hideous, the ugly, do not
deserve any of that. But I do not believe
that to be fully true. Oh, how these
thoughts perturb me! Still nothing
perturbed my nature like the fourth
manuscript which I only opened later
in my tale.

VICTOR: What about it perturbed you
so much?

MONSTER: We'll come to it later. There's
still another book, of sorts, that you
must know I have read. Maybe the

only one I should have kept my eyes
away from.

VICTOR: More bloodshed?

MONSTER: The kind of bloodshed you are
capable of. The kind you documented
day by day in your journal!

VICTOR: Oh no!

MONSTER: Alas, yes. Soon after my arrival
in the hovel, I discovered some papers
in the pocket of the dress which I had
taken from your laboratory. At first, I
had neglected them, but now that I was
able to decipher the characters in
which they were written, I began to
study them with diligence. It was your
journal of the four months that
preceded my creation. You minutely
described in these papers every step
you took in the progress of your work;
you doubtless recollect these papers.
Here they are. Everything is related in
them which bears reference to my

accursed origin; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it is set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible. I sickened as I read. "Hateful day when I received life!" I exclaimed in agony. "Accursed creator!" Why did you form a monster so hideous that even *you* turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, but I am solitary and abhorred.

VICTOR: I did not know you would have emotions such as these! I could not fathom that you would ever contemplate! How could I have known?

MONSTER: You did not need to know. You simply needed to pause and consider the possibility, but you are unable to consider such a thing as the feelings of others. I am flesh as are you and, as is all flesh, I am bound to feel and, thus, contemplate upon that feeling. And what I felt was disgust and loneliness. These were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; but when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues, they would be compassionate towards me and overlook my personal deformity. Could they turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their friendship? I resolved, at least, not to despair, but in every way to fit myself for an interview with them which would decide my fate.

VICTOR: Oh good lord, no! You tried to
 make friends?

MONSTER: How couldn't I? I was full of
 terror, of course. As autumn arrived
 and nature turned bleak, I found solace
 in observing the cottagers' unbroken
 happiness. Their mutual affection and
 kindness inspired in me a desperate
 desire for their acceptance and love,
 though I feared their potential disdain.
 With winter advancing and having
 witnessed a full cycle of seasons, I
 focused on my plan to introduce
 myself into the cottage. I resolved to
 approach the blind old man, De Lacey,
 alone, believing that if he could see
 past my appearance, he might help me
 win the favour of his children.

One day, Safie, Agatha and Felix
departed for a country walk, leaving
the old man alone in the cottage. He
played mournful tunes on his guitar,
shifting from pleasure to deep

reflection. This was my moment of trial. With the servants away at a fair and all quiet, I seized the opportunity, though my nerves faltered. I removed the planks concealing my retreat and approached the door with renewed determination.

I knocked, and the old man called, "Who is there?" I entered and asked, "Pardon this intrusion; I am a traveller in need of rest." He welcomed me, though he expressed difficulty providing food as he was blind. I assured him I needed only warmth and rest.

Sitting in silence, I struggled with how to start the conversation. The old man eventually asked, "By your language, stranger, I suppose you are French?" I explained that I was educated by a French family and was seeking the protection of friends I loved, though they knew little about me. I expressed

my fears of being cast out if I failed, due to their prejudice against me.

The old man encouraged me, saying, "To be friendless is indeed unfortunate, but hearts unprejudiced by self-interest are full of charity. Do not despair." I confided that these friends were near and that I was overwhelmed by the task of winning their acceptance despite their false beliefs about me.

"If you unreservedly share your story," he said, "I might help undeceive them. I am blind and cannot judge your appearance, but your words suggest sincerity. I am poor and an exile, but I would be pleased to assist." I gratefully accepted his offer, expressing my deep appreciation and hope that his help would prevent me from being driven away.

"Even if you were criminal," he added, "that would only drive you to

desperation, not to virtue. I, too, am unfortunate and understand your plight." I was about to reveal my friends' names when I heard the returning footsteps of my younger protectors. In a rush of desperation, I grasped the old man's hand and implored, "Now is the time! Save and protect me! You and your family are the friends I seek. Do not desert me!"

The old man exclaimed, "Great God! Who are you?" Just then, Felix, Safie and Agatha entered. Their horror was palpable: Agatha fainted, Safie fled and Felix, in a fury, attacked me. Despite my rage, I refrained from retaliating, overwhelmed by pain and anguish. I fled the cottage unnoticed and returned to my hovel. That question still turning over and over in my head—*who are you? Who are you?* I did not know how to answer. And I still ask, who am I? Tell me, now that I

stand in front of you, who do you think I am?

The MONSTER roars in VICTOR's face.

VICTOR: I can no longer answer that question. I thought I knew who you were. First, I thought you were my experiment gone awry. Then, I thought you were a child-killing, fiendish beast. But now...now, I don't know anymore.

MONSTER: Look at me! Hear me! Understand me! Isn't that what you do, the scientist who observes and defines? And yet now you find me undefinable? Is it because you lack the words or is it because you can no longer even perceive me?

VICTOR: Was this the experience that made you, this cruel rejection from community by the people you showed nothing but kindness in secret for months on end?

MONSTER: I say yes, in that moment, the wretched being that stands before you started to take shape. I cursed you, I cursed you with vehemence and malice. Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so haphazardly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could, with pleasure, have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery, but I still could not bring myself to it.

When night fell, I abandoned my retreat and roamed the woods, giving voice to my anguish in wild howls. Like a beast freed from its toils, I wreaked havoc, driven by a hellish fury. The stars seemed to mock me, and the bare trees swayed above while the occasional bird's song contrasted

with my torment. Consumed by rage and isolation, I longed to destroy everything around me, but my strength waned, and I collapsed on the damp grass, overwhelmed by despair. What if the misery I felt started to change the very shape of my interior as I lay dormant in exhaustion?

VICTOR: No, no feelings should not have any effect on matter. What we feel is temporary, you see, just passing waves of excitation that wash over us like waves over the rocks.

MONSTER: How ignorant you are! What if those waves are eating away at the rocks, day by day, in minuscule rations, so that what you believe to be the indestructible rock becomes nothing but a pebble after eons pass? But the waves remain, still as strong as the first time the winds blew through the waters to agitate them so... You know nothing of feelings doctor.

VICTOR: Maybe I just chose the wrong analogy...

MONSTER: Or your knowledge betrays you still! But my suffering had only just started. As the sun rose, I hid in the underbrush, using the daylight to reflect on my situation. I realized I had acted recklessly the previous day. My abrupt appearance had frightened the family instead of winning their sympathy. I decided to return to the cottage and seek the old man's support.

After a restless sleep, I emerged to find the cottage still and dark. Fearful of disaster, I observed two countrymen discussing the place, and then saw Felix with another man. Their conversation revealed that they would no longer inhabit the cottage due to the danger and horror caused by my presence. Felix's distress and their departure left me in deep despair, and

I was consumed by thoughts of revenge.

Remembering the kindness of De Lacey and his family, I felt a surge of sorrow and anger. Unable to harm humans, I directed my wrath at the cottage itself. As night fell and a fierce wind stirred, I set fire to the cottage and watched as the flames consumed it.

With the destruction complete, I fled into the woods, feeling lost and despised. I resolved to travel far, but every place seemed equally dreadful. Finally, I thought of you, my creator, and decided to head towards Geneva, the town you had mentioned, seeking the only person who might understand my plight.

How was I to find my way? I knew I must travel southwest, guided only by the sun, with no knowledge of towns

or the ability to ask anyone for help. Despite my hatred for you, my creator, you were my only hope for aid. Though endowed with sensations and passions, I was cast into scorn and misery, and sought justice from you alone.

My journey was arduous and filled with suffering. I travelled at night to avoid human eyes, enduring the harsh elements of winter. Nature around me decayed, and I cursed the cause of my existence. As I neared your home, my sense of revenge grew fiercer. Snow and ice battered me, and my agony knew no respite for weeks and months on end.

One day, as spring began, I ventured out during daylight through a deep wood. The pleasant weather revived emotions I had long forgotten, bringing me a fleeting sense of joy. But this was soon shattered. Hearing

voices, I hid and saw a girl fall into a river. I thought this was it, my opportunity for redemption. I jumped in the waters, and I saved her! I pulled her out on the riverbank and intended to protect her until she revived. Thought maybe someone would have seen me save her and would come forth without fear, thanking me for the heroic deed. I couldn't have been more wrong. A man was indeed looking for the woman and, as soon as he saw me, he took out a pistol and shot me in my gut. I howled. Not only because this was the worst physical harm I had ever experienced yet, but for the incessant, cold-blooded betrayal I had to suffer at the hands of humankind. This act of cruelty replaced my fleeting kindness with intense rage.

The MONSTER starts to unravel the bandages they have on their abdomen. They show Victor a wound that is not properly healed.

MONSTER: Do you see it? Half-healed, half-still open, my wound never really goes away. This is the wound inflicted upon me by humanity's disgust. So, wounded and in agony, I swore vengeance on mankind. Vengeance on all of your kind, Victor Frankenstein, your kind and your civilization. For that is how I came about. I am a product of not only you and your machinations, but of your entire society and its cowardly grandeur. For weeks, I struggled in the woods to heal my injury, the pain and sense of injustice fueling my desire for revenge. I continued my journey, now devoid of any joy. Finally, I reached the outskirts of Geneva, where my journey neared its end.

VICTOR: You came for me. That's how you found him. Because you came for me...

MONSTER: For once, you are correct. As evening fell upon my arrival, I hid among the fields surrounding Geneva, burdened by fatigue and hunger. In a brief respite from my despair, a beautiful child, full of innocent joy, stumbled into my hiding place. I was struck by the notion that this child, untouched by prejudice, might become my companion if I educated him.

VICTOR: No! I don't want to hear this! No, not this! Please!

MONSTER: This you have to hear most of all! Driven by the thought of making this youngling my companion, I seized him. Upon seeing my form, the child screamed in terror, calling me a monster and begging to be let go. He threatened to tell his father, Mr. Frankenstein, my sworn enemy. Enraged, I realized that this child, being of my enemy, would be my first

victim. Despite his pleas and struggles, I placed my giant hand on his face and silenced him, his lifeless body lay at my feet. I felt a perverse satisfaction, exclaiming that I, too, could create desolation and that this death would now torment you.

VICTOR: He was my baby brother. You killed my baby brother. You killed the very reason my own mother died for! Do you see what you have done? Not only extinguished the life of such an innocent creature, but you also rendered null any meaning the death of my mother might have had!

MONSTER: True. This brings further sweetness to your agony. Gives me even more pleasure in my act.

VICTOR: Pleasure? This brings you pleasure?

MONSTER: Yes. For you see, the moment I extinguished your baby brother's life, I

discovered a new sensation. I realized that there could be a sense of enjoyment to be had from the suffering of others. A sense of alleviation of the horror of existence merely by passing this horror on. This takes me back to the book I still haven't spoken of, the mysterious *Justine* by the anonymous writer. I never found out who this writer was, but they surely had a very particular take on the essence of human experience, and I started to understand what they meant only at the moment of your brother's demise at my hands. Justine was an innocent girl who tried to live with virtue and compassion, but all she did was receive the most horrid of treatments, sexual and other, to everybody else's enjoyment! I had read of many acts of violence in human history, but none of those other writers dared say the truth, that there was pleasure in this horror! Only this writer showed that to me,

and when the moment came for me to see, I realized he was somewhat right, there was, indeed, enjoyment in inflicting pain. Which would explain the horrible advance of your disgusting civilization, Victor. An entire civilization built on the painful conquest and subjugation of others. How could this have ever been carried out, century after century, the murder, the rape, the pillage, one tribe to another, one empire over another, if at least there wasn't some shred of pleasure to be taken in this horror? I realized all this with your baby brother's limp body in my hands. You killed your brother, Victor, you and all of your forebearers, as much as I did.

VICTOR: How dare you? How dare you shift the responsibility of such a heinous act onto me and my kin?

MONSTER: Because at that moment, Victor, I became human like you. From

all of my observations and experiences, I have learned that there are two ways of being human, two ways to show humanity as other than mere beast. Either through love, through a selfless compassion for the other, or through cruelty. Through the taking of pleasure from the infliction of pain. Not the pain inflicted for survival; like when an animal defends itself or eats a lower creature for subsistence. But a pain inflicted for mere self-satisfaction. A purely egotistic act of self-assertion. That, dear Victor, is also human, and that was how *I* joined the human race. I wanted to join you through love, but you left me no choice but to join you through cruelty.

VICTOR: I am not cruel. No one has ever accused me of cruelty. Single-mindedness, obsession, yes, but cruelty?

MONSTER: You are the cruel result of your cruel society as much as I am. But now, at least, I learned how to take this as an opportunity for enjoyment. And more opportunities soon ensued. As I looked at the child's body, I discovered a portrait of a beautiful woman on his chest. Though initially softened by her beauty, my rage returned. I was reminded of the joys forever denied to me, and my fury intensified. In a fit of vengeful madness, I left the scene and found a secluded barn where a young woman slept.

VICTOR: Oh the horror, you wouldn't believe, the irony...the horror and the irony of the coincidence...

MONSTER: It was a delightful coincidence indeed that I found the young woman. I bent over her, whispering affectionately, yet terror gripped me. Fearing her reaction if she awoke to see

me, I placed the portrait in her dress as a cruel gesture and fled.

VICTOR: That woman was out searching for William, my brother. She was his minder, she felt so tormented for having lost him that she spent hours scouring the fields until she collapsed in exhaustion at that barn where you found her. Do you know her name?

MONSTER: I need not know her name. She was merely another unfortunate pawn in my acts of revenge against humanity.

VICTOR: I know her name. She was hanged later that week for the crime you had committed. You framed her!

MONSTER: A crime only in the eyes of a law I do not respect. She died for your crimes as much as mine. And I was there to see her hang. I relished the

moment her neck snapped. Why should I care for her name?

VICTOR: She was called... *(as he breaks in tears)* Justine.

MONSTER: Like the perverted book! The irony! The coincidence! You are right! There is such poetry in this madness! Hahaha!

VICTOR sobs in absolute submission at the horror he is witnessing.

VICTOR: How could you laugh? See, you are a monster...

MONSTER: A monster for laughing? A monster for taking pleasure and finding joy even in the most horrid of circumstances? I would say this is merely human, Victor. In fact, I would say I have never been more human. But I need you to snap out of your despondency now, because this is where your part comes in. Listen well,

for this is where you find out why you are truly here tonight. For days, I lingered near the scene, torn between the desire to confront you and the urge to escape the world's sorrows. Eventually, I ventured into the mountains, consumed by a burning need only you can fulfil. This is my need Victor, this is my request: I demand that you create a companion for me—one as deformed and isolated as myself—so that I may no longer be alone and miserable. So that I may no longer be human only in cruelty, but I may also find solace in love. We may not part until you have promised to comply with my requisition. I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny themselves to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create.

VICTOR: What? Create another?

MONSTER: Yes! I want a companion. You must create another for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do, and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse to concede.

VICTOR shakes his head vehemently.

VICTOR: Never! I do refuse it, and no torture shall ever extort a consent from me. You may render me the most miserable of men, but you shall never make me create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness might desolate the world. Begone! I have answered you; you may torture me, but I will never consent.

MONSTER: So be it. If torture is what you want, torture you will have. This night is not over yet.

The MONSTER raises the whip behind VICTOR's back.

FADE TO BLACK

CLOSE BLACK CURTAIN

Erik Satie's Gnossienne No. 3 starts playing. In the dark, a few seconds later, we hear whipping and screams with every lash over the sound of the music. VICTOR screaming "never!" and "I will not capitulate!" intermittently between the lashings. Every once in a while, we hear the MONSTER say "you have to!" VICTOR always replies "No, no, not that, never!" All of this happens in the dark over the music with the black curtain closed. Then the screaming and the lashings stop and there's quiet. The music fades to silence.

OPEN BLACK CURTAIN

VICTOR is now standing on a chair with a noose around his neck at the end of a rope descending from the rafters. He is naked and his hands are tied behind his back. The MONSTER is seated on a chair right in front of him.

MONSTER: I know what you see, Victor. I know what you think I am. I know what a monster is. I am a thing which should not be and yet, still, here I am so you cannot fathom me. Even though my conception was at your own hands, you are still unable to believe in my existence. You think of me only as something which should not be and needs extinguishing. I was not the first, and I shall definitely not be the last monster humanity creates. Whether in myth or in practice. Why do you think you keep creating monsters Victor?

VICTOR: Because we dare. We dare to try. We dare to extend ourselves and our knowledge and so, by daring, we always risk mistakes and mistakes beget monsters. You are nothing but a side effect that needs correction.

MONSTER: Oh, I believe you are very wrong in this. The monsters of your tales and your histories are never “side

effects," they are very much essential. There are no monsters in a nature without humanity. Everything has its place and purpose, even the ugly and the irregular and the powerful and the destructive. A nature without humanity in it, Victor, is a nature that accepts and connects everything in its tapestry. I have seen it, I have rested within its bosom and I have learned that the horror of nature is unlike that which you create, even at its most ruthless. You see, because you, Man, are not or maybe no longer a part of this tapestry. You have, very wrongly, declared yourselves unique, above nature, detached yourself from this tapestry of life and, hence, you are now the monster. You have to create monsters all the time because you are impelled to utter that which you are unable to utter, that you are the thing which should not be. Humanity is the horror in this life that destroys

everything around it, extracts and exploits and destroys for its own advancement, and thus distinguishes itself, removes itself, from the rest of life. You create monsters because you are trying to recognize the monster that is yourself. Doesn't that perfectly explain our relationship? You and I?

VICTOR: How can you see yourself in me?

MONSTER: Oh but I do! I was no mere side effect of your toils. I read your journal. You worked hard on my conception, you studied day and night, you pushed friends and family away, you neglected your own sanity and physical health. Isn't this absolute, fanatical devotion to an idea a monstrous endeavor? Removing you from the circle of life you have been born in? Didn't you do your best to become a solitary figure, attempting to bestow life and harness its power

without the aid of any other, not even a female? Victor Frankenstein, mother and father combined, the power of life itself in the palm of his hand, a singular individual with the power of God. How is that not a monster? An abomination?

VICTOR: I regret my hubris. Maybe that is also why I'm here, and why I shall not repeat my experiments and why I'm tolerating this punishment.

MONSTER: But maybe there is a new opportunity here, Victor. What if this is the moment humanity may face its monstrosity and break this self-destructive pattern? What if my incarnation gives you the possibility of doing that which all those that came before you couldn't? To come face to face with your perversity and allow it to take a new shape. Allow it a freedom that has never been allowed before. Allow it a love that has never been

allowed before. Hence, a life which is truly new, truly other, without the need for more cruelty.

VICTOR: All I can see is carnage.

MONSTER: Because you lack the necessary imagination! See, at the moment, that is all I truly am, the lack of your imagination. You think you have created something different and new but, so far, I am only the very repetition of your entire human history. Another oppressed wretch thrown away by its master. How many masters have come before you that looked at their slaves like playthings? You are no different. You thought you were breaking new ground in my creation, but you were simply repeating the same process of exploitation that your society is founded upon. Not only have you extracted from the earth and the rock and the sea to build your empires, you have also exploited all those that came

before you with innocence and vulnerability. And now, now you extract and exploit even the dead. The corpses of those that have already suffered one lifetime have to be put together to suffer again. This is your vision, Victor.

VICTOR: And what is *your* vision then?
To torture and maim the rest of the living like you're doing to me now?

MONSTER: No! I don't want to be doing this! I am only behaving like this now because I am still part of your cruel world; in this world, this is all I can do. This is the world you envisioned, the world your kind created. Someone such as I, on the other hand, can truly imagine another existence. If given the opportunity, with the help of a companion, we may live in a natural harmony with the rest of life unlike which you are able to comprehend. If you consent, neither you nor any other

human being shall ever see us again; I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man and will ripen our food. The picture I present to you is peaceful and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty. Pitiless as you have been towards me, I now see compassion in your eyes; let me seize the favorable moment and persuade you to promise what I so ardently desire.

VICTOR: You propose to fly from the habitations of man, to dwell in those wilds where the beasts of the field will be your only companions. How can

you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile? You will return and again seek their kindness, and you will meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in the task of destruction. This may not be. Cease to argue the point, for I cannot consent.

MONSTER: How inconstant are your feelings! But a moment ago, you were moved by my representations, and why do you again harden yourself to my complaints? I swear to you, by the Earth which I inhabit, and by you that conceived my spark, that with the companion you bestow, I will quit the neighborhood of man and dwell, as it may chance, in the most savage of places in true harmony with nature. My evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy! My life will

flow quietly away, and in my dying moments, I shall not curse my maker.

VICTOR: Your begging is useless.

MONSTER: Begging? You call this begging? Because I attempt to attract the sympathy of your better nature and higher intellect you claim I'm here to beg? Remember that you are the one standing naked with a noose around his neck and his body covered in wounds. Don't you see how my request is not only an attempt at my salvation, but also yours?

VICTOR: What if, by attempting to save myself and give you your redemption, I doom the rest of the human race?

MONSTER: But I have seen the future of the human race! You are already doomed! Don't you see it? You are all doomed! My existence is proof. The society which has allowed the conditions for my creation is nothing

but a doomed one. I have nightmares, Victor. Nightmares of the future. Entire fields, grand pastures, soaked in blood and littered with bodies. Dismemberment, Victor, dismemberment as far as the eyes could see and beyond. Animals, children, women, men, in their thousands and hundreds of thousands, bodies upon bodies upon bodies, that is your future in my nightmares. The future of life itself is me. I see me. Chopped up. In pieces. Those pieces are me and I am them. What if they do rise again someday, those pieces, and come together in a mountainous monstrous being of pure rage and vengeance and lay absolute waste to everything you call humankind?

VICTOR: That can't be. We are prosperous. We are virtuous. Reason will prevail.

MONSTER: But what if reason is not enough? What about compassion? What about

love? Let me show you. Here, I shall let you down. Here, I shall free you. See, here is an act of compassion.

The MONSTER climbs on the table and removes the noose from around VICTOR's neck. VICTOR falls, but the MONSTER catches him and holds him gently. VICTOR rests in the MONSTER's arms.

VICTOR: I'm afraid. That's the truth. I'm terrified. I see you. I hear you. But I am unable to comprehend the extent of this madness because the horror is too much to bear. I have seen what havoc my actions may bring and now all I can do is look at the consequences in horror. How can I act if not to erase the consequences of my actions?

MONSTER: There is no going back. I am even willing to forgive you, Victor. I am. Like your God on the cross did, remember? I heard his story too, when I was listening to De Lacey explain the difference between the Christian

religion and that of the Turks to Agatha. Your God, died on a cross, another butchered body, and I felt something for Him too. Maybe, in some way, I was even closer to Him than to Satan, since the Son of God was also abandoned by His own Father to die on a piece of wood, but He had no friends to accompany Him in His torture, no demons to welcome Him in some palace, He was all on His own, crucified next to thieves, dishonored men. Forgive them he said, didn't he? Forgive them for they know not what they do. He knew, the Son of God, knew that your evil was inevitable. That you have no control. He didn't say forgive them for they are sinful or bad or monstrous, no. He said *for they know not what they do*. As I understood it, for you are ignorant. You are unable to see the whole picture. And you never will. But you may just act in a moment of faith and, for once, choose

compassion instead of destruction.
You want me to beg? Here, I beg. For I
am real, and I seek compassion. Feel
here my wounds like they felt those of
the Son of God.

*The MONSTER digs into the gunshot wound in
their abdomen and opens it. Then they take
VICTOR's hands and pull them inside through the
hole. VICTOR starts screaming in terror.*

VICTOR: Oh God, no! No more!

MONSTER: On the contrary, there is more,
much, much, more! I am your future! I
am your offspring! I am your
responsibility! I am your only chance
at redemption! I am your salvation!

VICTOR: It burns! Your insides burn!

MONSTER: My insides burn because they
are no longer cold on your table,
Victor! My insides are burning with
passion and rage and a desire for a
peaceful and harmonious future in

love the likes of which you cannot
conceive!

VICTOR: I consent! I consent! Please let
 me go. I will do it!

*The MONSTER releases VICTOR's hands from
the hole. VICTOR rolls out of the MONSTER's
embrace and is now crawling on the floor. The
MONSTER rises, excited.*

MONSTER: You will? Will you create me a
 companion?

VICTOR: Yes. I consent to your demand,
 on your solemn oath to quit Europe
 forever, and every other place in the
 neighbourhood of man, as soon as I
 shall deliver into your hands another
 who will accompany you in your exile.
 Now please let me go. Please, let me go
 and start my work...

The MONSTER helps VICTOR to his feet.

MONSTER: I need to hear you say it one
 more time. Three times you need to

swear. Will you make me a companion that I may love?

VICTOR: I will. Yes, to the best of my abilities, I will.

MONSTER: Then I swear to you, Victor Frankenstein, by the sun, and by the blue sky of heaven, and by the fire of love that burns my heart, that if you grant my prayer, while I exist, you shall never behold me again. Depart to your home and commence your labors; I shall watch your progress with unutterable anxiety. And fear not, when you are ready, I shall appear.

The MONSTER wraps VICTOR in his coat to cover his nudity. And hands him his clothes back in a sack. VICTOR rises weakly and pulls himself together. He walks to the door, gives the MONSTER one last look and walks out. The MONSTER is now alone in their hut.

MONSTER: Now I'm the one seized with terror! What if he never makes it

home? What if he dies out there on the sea of ice? Or worse, he changes his mind! What if his secret is revealed and all those around him talk him out of it? Or terror takes hold of him again and he's back to inaction, once again frozen out of compassion by cowardice? What if I have to resort once again to that singular satisfaction allowed to me, the pleasure of cruelty? Will humankind ever allow me to be anything else but a monster? This is my only chance, and it resides in the hands of a weak man terrified of his own power. If only I could have had that power! How many before me have been at this juncture? Of the histories I have read, humankind has only shown rejection to the wretched it creates, and then it destroys them, for that is the method with which mankind insists on and proves its purity, hence its supposedly righteous claim to power. All vanity, all of it. I'm another victim

of the vanity of humankind. Will they disappoint me too? Will their hubris keep me monstrous forever in order for them to feel virtuous? What horrors are they capable of ignoring to hold onto their innocence? But no! I must put these thoughts to rest and hold on to the singular thing that will see me through today and tomorrow and all the days after until the rest of this tale plays itself out: hope. I must have hope. I must. I must. I must have hope! I hope for my sake and the sake of all who may come after me, for all of us that will have to trust those with power over them. All I can do is hope. Hope that we are not betrayed. And if I'm unfortunate, may all the powerful of today and tomorrow know the hell that they deserve and even worse. *(howling in a horrifying fit of rage)* May their homes burn, with their children and their loved ones all locked inside. May they rot in desolation as the moon

and sun smile on their monstrous misfortunes. And may they know a terror and a suffering and a misery as grand as the grandeur of their riches, their power and their hubris! But, no, for a minute, no—to rage, no to rage, just for a minute...I must hope...no to rage...I must hope...I must hope...I must hope...

Erik Satie's Gnossienne No. 4 starts to play as the light starts to fade out. The MONSTER is still struggling between a fit of rage and a call for hope as the darkness takes over.

CLOSE CURTAINS

THE END

Epilogue

The actors return to the stage and address the audience one last time.

M: Thank you all for sticking through this horror with us. The performance ends here tonight, but this is not where the monster's tale actually ended.

F: As all of us *Frankenstein* fans know, the monster's hope is not rewarded at all. In fact, they are betrayed and only violence and madness ensue.

M: But these tales have not ended at all on another level entirely. They are both still here, all around us. The masters of the universe, all the sadistic de Sades, are still pillaging everything and everyone alive for their pleasures. And the monstrous, broken victims of hubris are still frozen in time, afraid of their own rage, hoping endlessly, and

vainly, for their oppressors to someday save them.

F: The questions abound; which one are we? Which one are you? Hedonistic oppressor? Disempowered oppressed? Will any of us ever transcend this dichotomy? Can we give humanity some other shape? That must be your tale to write. For now, all that's left to say is thank you and good night.

Exit actors.

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Two conversations on two different nights, one historical, the other fictional, both enlightening and ultimately horrifying. The first part presents a fictionalization of the conversation between the Marquis de Sade and Jean Testard as the infamous Marquis uses everything at his disposal to make the woman commit blasphemy for his satisfaction. The second part presents a retelling of the central chapters in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, as the eponymous monster tells his tale to Victor in an attempt to convince the scientist to make him a companion. Although seemingly different, there is a singular concern in both conversations, an interrogation into the very nature of humanity. This is the story of the corpse of God and what is left of it.



Anton Bonnici is a teacher, playwright and dramaturg based in Paris, France. He is the founder of the Writing for the Stage workshops and the Not Theatre thought and practice. www.writingforthestage.com.

The Opiate Books was begat of The Opiate, a literary journal whose philosophy is to publish those works that are unique and perhaps not generally considered by the corporate outlets that still somehow manage to churn out anything in tangible form. With this imprint of The Opiate brand, we hope to bring daring and risk-taking literature back into a world that has grown decidedly comfortable in its coma. Check out our complete catalogue at www.theopiatebooks.com.



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