

# The Old Tower of Frankenstein

By Anonymous

Two lovers, a youth and a maiden, once lived on the banks of the Rhine, where it winds between lofty rocks, and is overhung with gloomy forests. The passage-barques go furiously with the stream of the river in this part, and the helmsman used to return thanks when he saw behind him the old Tower of Frankenstein. From this ruin, standing upright and alone, like a pine tree, the owl still sent a long and loud cry, when the shadow of night fell heavily from the lofty bank over the boiling current of the profound water.

In the shadow of this edifice did the couple now stand, hand in hand, when the young man softly spoke:

“Once only do I desire to have thee to myself, without fear of spies, that I may be free to the delight which thy presence brings, did not the eyes of jealous suspicion watch me.”

The maiden listened to his pleading breath, and tears filled her light blue eyes; but she spoke not in reply, for her heart beat so fast it held speechless her tongue.

Then at a sound from above, the youth spoke again:

“But look up! Behold the single tower of Frankenstein; hear how the owl brings forth his loud and lonely cry, and the shadow of the tower is cast across the deep water. Say, dearest, dost thou love me? Then let us haste to that tower for when the owl cries, at the safe midnight hour, it will be free to only us.”

At these words, the maiden trembled and she came closer to the side of her lover. At last she spoke:

“I dare not meet you at the castle ruins for that foul bird chills my bones with thoughts of the dread curse that hangs o’er it.”

And glancing up again, the maiden thinks on the story of the spirit of the woman and her child once sacrificed to the monster and said to haunt the tower though the creature lay slain by the Baron Frankenstein these many years. A chill grips her gentle frame and pale is her cheek.

But the youth, his blood now in passion risen, will not be stilled. Even should the spirits be there, he boldly charges, maybe if they go they can release the unhappy souls as some stories say. He vows that they must meet in the shade of the tower the very next night and pleads anew with his dear love. For a while she is still, then a tremble shakes her body, but she stoutly replies,

“I will, love.”

Another day has passed and the moon once more ascended. The breeze came chill and with a swelling noise from the forest, and the hills behind; the voice of the river rose and a melancholy shade fell over the old ruins.

But now what form is that which ascends the rocky pathway towards the grey ruin? It is the maiden that climbs amongst the waving bushes in the steep and narrow track. Her white dress flutters in the air—her steps slide—she pauses as if she would return. Midnight is near—she advances again; and now she is lost in the dark shade of the old ruined tower.

But the dauntless chevalier has met his beloved one, and tears of joy and gratitude run down his flushed cheeks; his arms entwine her waist—they are in the courtyard of the tower—their eyes are full of love. They are seated on the soft moss that springs from the ancient stones. High beats the heart of the youth, for here suspicion does not watch; but the maiden trembles—her

hands are cold—she is weak and timid, and mutters as a sick child—a clammy horror creeps over her senses, as she regards the blackness of a low doorway full before her face. It once led to the pit of tears, the deep dungeon of the ancient tower.

In vain rushes through the ruin the power of the storm; in vain howl the gusts of the uprisen tempest through the desolate place. The angel of female shame is about to fly—when, lo! a burst of rain and thunder—the heavy bird gives a last cry, and strikes, with flapping wing, affrighted from his dark roost. A dead silence prevails, and from the church steeple is heard the midnight hammer of the old bell.

What rises from the black mouth of the fearful dungeon? The eyes of the lovers are fixed as by a supernatural power. Is it fog? Is it cloud? Is it a human shape? A spectral woman comes forth; she advances towards the maiden and the youth; an infant lies at her bosom, half covered by a stained shroud.

Then did the doleful vision speak:

“Now is the doom accomplished, now is the curse lifted,” uttered the pale lips of the spectral woman. “The decree is fulfilled, for by your attendance here two souls are this night rescued from the curse under which they were flung those long years ago.”

She ceased. The maiden sunk low her head—the lover regarded her with a look of troubled affection. Slowly she raised the shroud-wrapped child. Mercy, mercy! was chanted in the air above: sweet sounds of harps were heard, and all had vanished in a flood of morning splendour.

Soon all had disappeared, and in a calm and lovely morning, with the sun shedding brilliancy upon the waters of the noble Rhine, the guiltless lovers descended from the old castle of Frankenstein.