

How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein: A Literary Genesis

The year was 1816, a time of turmoil and change. The world was reeling from the aftermath of the French Revolution, and Europe was on the brink of war. In this tumultuous setting, a young woman named Mary Shelley penned a novel that would forever change the course of literary history: *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

But how did this extraordinary work of art come to be? What were the circumstances, the influences, and the personal experiences that shaped its creation? In this article, we will explore the fascinating story behind the birth of *Frankenstein*, uncovering the secrets that lie at the heart of this Gothic masterpiece.



She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein by Lynn Fulton

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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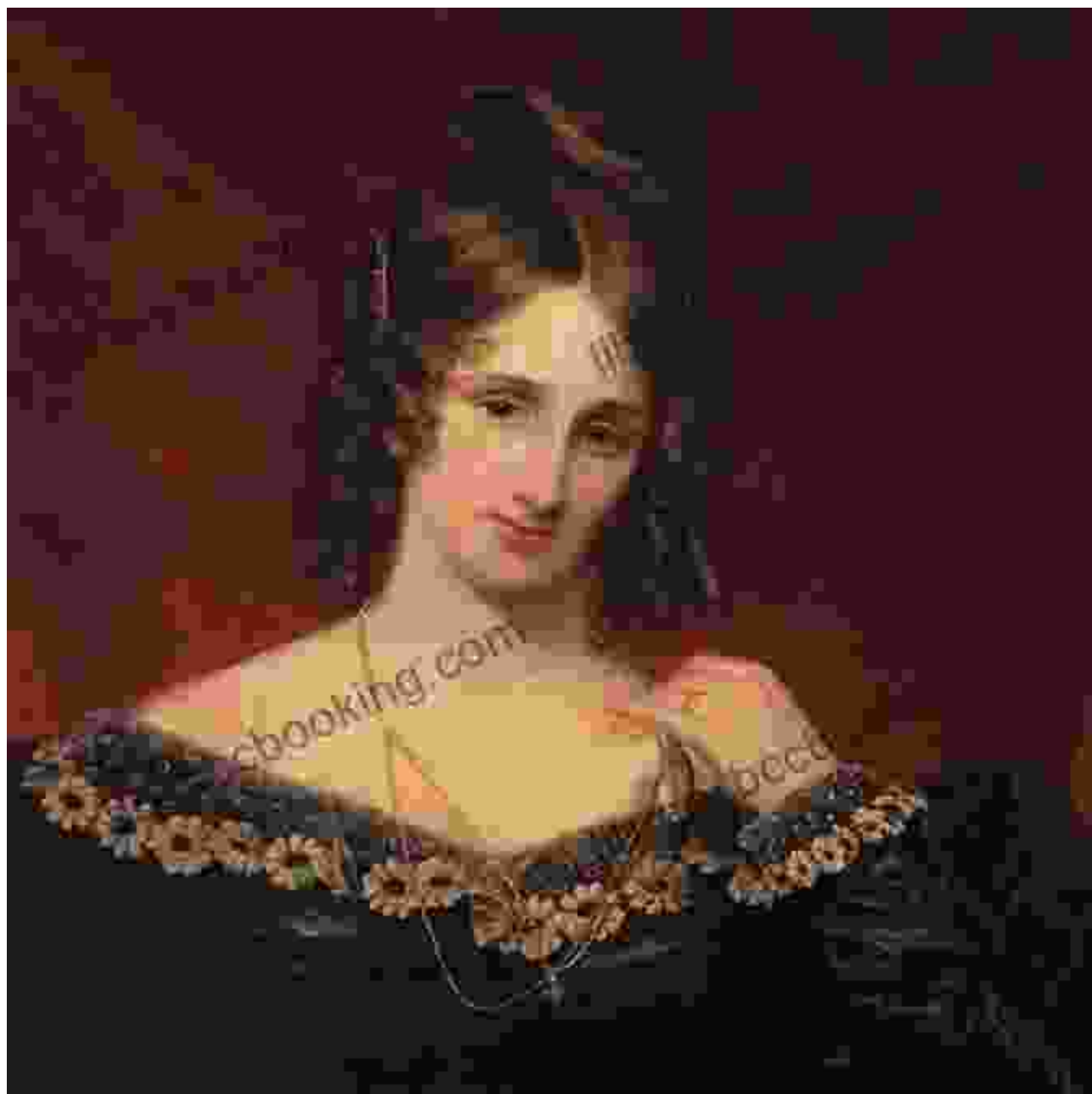
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A Summer of Darkness and Imagination



The summer of 1816 was a particularly gloomy one in Europe. The eruption of Mount Tambora the previous year had cast a volcanic veil over the continent, blocking out the sun and causing widespread crop failures. The resulting "Year Without a Summer" brought darkness and despair to many regions.

In June of that year, Mary Shelley, then just 18 years old, found herself at the Villa Diodati on the shores of Lake Geneva. She was traveling with her lover, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, her stepsister Claire Clairmont, and the poet Lord Byron. The group had gathered to escape the political turmoil in England and to indulge in their shared passion for literature.

As the days turned into weeks, the weather worsened and the group was confined indoors. With little to distract them, they began to tell each other ghost stories. One evening, as they huddled around the fire, Byron challenged each member to write their own supernatural tale.

The Birth of *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley was initially hesitant to participate in the challenge. She had never written a novel before, and she doubted her abilities. However, as she listened to the others share their ideas, her imagination began to stir.

Over the next few days, Mary Shelley worked feverishly on her story. She drew inspiration from the Gothic novels she had read, as well as from her own experiences of loss and grief. The novel that emerged from her pen was a dark and haunting tale about a young scientist named Victor Frankenstein who creates a grotesque creature that turns against him.

When Mary Shelley finally shared her story with the others, they were stunned by its power and originality. Byron declared that it was "a wonderful



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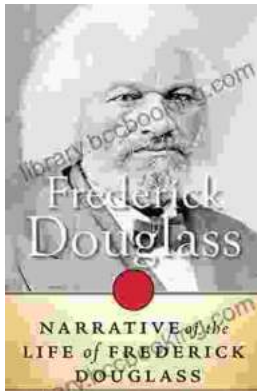
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