

THE RESURRECTION TRINITY



FRANKENSTEIN SOUL'S ECHO

Book 2 of 3

PETE PLANISEK

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FRANKENSTEIN SOUL'S ECHO

Book 2 of 3

The Resurrection Trinity

PETE PLANISEK

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Pete Planisek

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For my family

CHARACTERS

*Ernest Frankenstein

Abrielle (Orfilia)

*The Creature

Tara Tierney Frankenstein (Chavi)

*Victor Frankenstein – deceased

Geneva

Christiansen

Salzburg

Jack Clerval

Costanza Clerval

The Duke

General de Corps d' A'rmee Ouellet

The Wild Rose clan prisoners

Baseria Nalie

Etolie

Vochallet

Isyll

Sebbi

The Wild Rose clan

Jal Nalie

Espen Nalie

Nasi Nalie (Nagyanya) - deceased

Mayte Nalie – deceased

Patia Nalie – deceased

Judika – deceased

Kelv

Hytr

The Moon Shadow clan

Nicabar

Tasaria

Pias (Boier Amăgitor)

The Moon Shadow Fortress

The Old Ones

Pell

Ghul

Captain Ayt

Tyben

China

Xie Xue Maa

Ai Qui Maa

Wei Maa

France

Noel and Anne D'Aoust

Spies

Bellange

Chloe (Onella)

Berryer

Grenier

Bayonne

Paul (Cheval)

Sister Annette

Sister Michelle

Sister Josephine

Bordouex

Amelie Sarah

*All characters from Mary Shelly's Frankenstein.

*“I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
Have riv’d the knotty oaks; and I have seen
Th’ ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam;
To be exalted with the threat’ning clouds:
But never till to-night, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction.”*

*-William Shakespeare
Julius Caesar (1.3.5-13)*

CHAPTER 1

THE ENDLESS DAWN

Ernest shielded his eyes, and for a moment, the world was nothing but the pulsing blend created by shadow and light. He blinked fervently. He felt her knock into him and giggle as she raced by, down towards the meadow, which was awash in wildflowers and dazzling emerald grasses. The clean, cool air of the mountains refreshed him as he dodged among grass and stone in pursuit.

“Give it back.”

Without turning around, she only shook her head, laughed, and tauntingly held up the object fueling his pursuit. Her dress and several glances backward slowed her escape, but escape was not the purpose of this game. Twice his hands snatched at her waist, but both times she deftly managed to elude his touch. Her eyes danced with mischief as she swatted blonde strands of hair away from them. God, he loved her smile. A shriek of mock panic escaped her as he tried to grab her a third time, the result of which sent them tumbling towards a mixed patch of strawberries and wildflowers. A swarm of tiny insects fled upwards, away from the disturbance of their world caused by the intrusion of the panting humans.

“Now ... would you please ... give me back my hat?”

Ailis rolled her body to prevent his hand from prizing the hat out from underneath her. The stalemate amused her.

“Perhaps ... if you ask me nicely, Monsieur Frankenstein,” she said haughtily. She seemed convinced he’d met his match, that is until he began to tickle her. Soon Ailis was berating him as she laughed and swatted at him with the hat.

“That wasn’t fair,” she admonished as she regained her composure and stuck his hat back upon his head at a ridiculous angle.

Ernest pushed it back on his forehead and grinned smugly, “I never said I play fair.” His hand unconsciously caressed her hair, and she smiled softly as he leaned in to kiss her. But their lips did not meet. Instead there was only light. An empty, blinding light, which drove the dream from his mind and returned him to the lonely darkness of his life.

*

Upon awakening all he felt was pain and the sickening weight of unbearable grief. She was not here. His love, his friend, his soul was back in Ireland, resting beside her father, in a quiet cemetery. And he was here, adrift on the restless seas of the world.

As the ship rode the waves, a brilliant flash of sun briefly shot through the cabin window then vanished. Had they finally outrun the storm that had plagued them since leaving the Orkneys? How long had it truly been since he’d seen the sun? It hardly mattered.

The briefest of knocks was issued before the gypsy entered, pistol in hand.

“The Master orders you on deck,” he spat contemptuously in French.

‘The Master ...,’ Ernest had barely spoken to Victor’s hideous, self-proclaimed prodigy since they’d come onboard. Time had quickly lost all relevance, night and day blended obscurely as they roved through the tempest. The few respites the storm had allowed shrouded the vessel in fog and mist. Ernest had ceased winding his watch some time ago as it had stopped twice while he slept and

was no longer a reliable gauge of reality. He'd been alone but for the thoughts recorded for him in his wife's journal. The journal! He'd been reading it when he'd fallen asleep. Ernest searched the bunk frantically but could not find it.

"Outside, now!" A second gypsy ordered as he joined the first in the doorway. He too was armed and bore an expression which left no quarter for arguing reason. Ernest relaxed. The journal probably was just buried in the blanket or had fallen and slid across the deck after he'd fallen asleep. Precious as it was he would just have to find it when he returned. Ernest could feel the cold air swirling through the door and took a moment to don his coat, then relented to the men's command.

The covered lanterns on either side of his cabin's doorway flickered angrily in the frigid winds. The sun had already been reclaimed by the sea, and the clouds and lightning again arched through the heavens. The heaving seas made walking extremely difficult, but Ernest's years spent on ships allowed his body to adjust his gait effectively. The two-masted schooner was handling these harsh conditions well, so far, but the longer they stayed in the storm, the more likely it became that ill fortune would find them.

More disquieting than the weather was the crew. The Moon Shadow gypsies, who seemed to comprise the bulk of men aboard, also seemed to highly resent his presence. As if they viewed him as some evil omen. But it was the others who truly worried him. He had seen only a handful of these cloaked figures since boarding, and though all appeared to be the size of ordinary men, even the gypsies gave them a wide berth. More strangely, these cloaked figures rarely showed any sign of movement. Even when waves washed upon the deck, threatening to drag a man back into the sea with them, the cloaked figures remained still. Their inexplicable behavior, coupled with their outward resemblance to the ship's 'Master,' disturbed him greatly. Did the same corruption of man exist beneath their robes or could they be something worse?

As he climbed the final steps to the deck, it was difficult for Ernest to imagine a sight more grotesque than the face he'd witnessed on the shores of North Ronaldsay Island. The face that the dark, brooding, shape now before him possessed. The devil's features faced astern into the most brutal of the winds. Ernest fervently hoped that the gale would not release the hood that now concealed the odious visage beneath. Perhaps sensing this, the cloaked man handed Ernest a spyglass, and without comment, pointed to a spot on the horizon. With the shifting seas, heaving waves, and swirling mist, it took Ernest sometime to ascertain what he was supposed to locate. Once it was clear that he had, the creature motioned him away from the stern and leaned in close.

"I'd hoped to lose them in the storm, Uncle. They have pursued us for sometime."

"Who are they?" Ernest yelled, as each word threatened to be taken by the winds.

"Avengers, from the nation we approach."

Ernest pondered this only a moment.

"This is their ship,"

"It is one."

Did that mean he had captured others?

"And what of her crew?"

The figure beside him was silent. Ernest turned away from him, but the nightmare followed and continued to speak.

"Unless the winds change, they will catch us within a day. Then there will be a battle."

"You can't outrun them?"

The figure nodded.

"They carry more sail and a more experienced crew."

Ernest thought quickly.

“Then surrender.”

He caught a brief glimpse of those cruel black lips.

“There is too much at stake, for both of us.”

Ernest felt a massive hand rest upon his shoulder and fought the urge to free himself.

“And what of their lives?” Ernest asked as he gestured towards the distant ship.

“I know of your battle experience at Trafalgar. Before you return to my presence, you must decide if you will help us defend this ship. The retrieval of your daughter, as well as your reunion with Jal’s child, depends upon our success.”

Ernest felt a gnawing cold in the pit of his stomach. How could this man know about his connection to Trafalgar? The unseen hand released him, and the immense creature returned to the stern. Ernest’s head was swimming as he was escorted back to his cabin and locked within.

For a moment he stood and merely felt the deck shifting beneath him before finally collapsing onto a poorly constructed chair by the room’s small desk. It groaned under the stress of its load, the back bowed as if ready to snap from the tension, but Ernest paid it no mind. His attention was now riveted to Ailis’ journal, which was now set squarely in the middle of the desk. Wordlessly, he sought to reconcile himself with the object.

Was he losing his mind? Could it have been here the whole time? No, he’d been reading it before he fell asleep; he was certain of that. Then how had the journal come to be here, at a place almost entirely opposite of his bunk? He opened it and discovered that the pale green ribbon Ailis had always used as a bookmark now lay between pages different from those he last recalled reading. Could one of the gypsies have found it upon the floor and simply placed it here?

A new and most unwelcome thought suddenly burned within him. Could the devil above have come below and read his wife’s journal while he slept? The thought of such a perverse intrusion enraged him. Anger and fear coursed through him. Though he longed to avenge this injustice, Ernest did not release his emotions. He could not afford to crumble under their weight. To display his true feelings would only further empower his captors and possibly aid their dark designs. No, he must devote his energies to reason. He must discover if the journal’s condition was the result of an innocent accident or deliberate manipulation. If the latter, it meant no thought once written, no space provided onboard was safe. What could the true purpose of his presence here be? Would it make itself known to him only when it was too late?

Ernest decided he could no longer afford the tranquil peace offered by sleep. At least the beast above had been honest about one thing: there was too much at stake. He felt within his jacket and was relieved to find the decorative box, which Nasi had entrusted to him, was still present and sealed. Ernest’s fingers caressed the box. Several times since his departure from Ireland he’d been tempted to open it. Nasi had specified this should only be done in a dark hour, as yet unknown to him. Ernest smiled bitterly at the thought. Had he spent an hour bereft of darkness since she’d issued the directive? His heart softened. Yes, Tara’s birth, his final hours with Ailis had been blessings. Comforted, he released the box and withdrew his hand from his jacket.

Ernest gathered Ailis’ journal and returned to the narrow bunk. The cabin was now all but dark as the storm reclaimed the ship into its lustful, vicious grasp. He closed his eyes for a moment and allowed his senses to open fully to the battle taking place all around him: urgent cries and orders from the men on deck, the strain of the wind and wave against the ship’s timbers, the sudden shifts in gravity as the vessel challenged the storm. Could this cursed vessel actually make a safe port? And if so, what awaited him there? Perhaps they would sink. Then at least it would be over. Or maybe their

pursuer would founder and no battle would occur. Slowly he opened his eyes. No, a battle was coming. He could feel it.

He tried not to think of death as lightning relentlessly stabbed the skies outside his window. Did he aid this crew in the destruction of another? If he failed to do so, would Tara and Baseria be forever lost to him as Ailis was now? Again his emotions surged in tune to the violent seas all around him. If he hadn't been so selfish she might still be alive. Tara would be home with them, and Baseria safe with her people. A sudden stinging pain jolted him from his reverie. He'd unconsciously begun to run his fingers through his hair, but failed to notice which hand he was using. The dim light permitted only a cursory examination of the angry, crimson tinged cut, deeply scored into his palm.

Despite the discomfort the wound afforded him, Ernest smiled. Abrielle bore an identical mark. The thought of his mysterious sister-in-law comforted him. The scar served as a constant reminder of their bond to each other, their oath to Ailis, and the promise of hope. The skin around the cut itched and throbbed. Where was she by now? Had she already found Jal and rescued Tara? Would they ever set eyes upon each other in this world again?

Ernest began to tear a small strip of linen from his sheets to rebind the wound. He needed to believe he would see her again. Before parting they'd each held numerous doubts about the other's ability to survive their respective ordeals, but they'd also recognized their only hope was their faith in each other. Actually if anyone possessed the skills to save Tara, a spy in service to Napoleon's Empire would seem to be a logical choice. Though more important than that was Abrielle's indisputable love for her niece and for Ailis. It was this love that would ultimately lead to either their shared salvation or destruction.

As he finished tying the bandage, Ernest found that his reflections about Abrielle provided him with a new inspiration. His sister-in-law would not passively sit and wait for others to decide her fate, of that Ernest was certain. The revelation that the schooner was a commandeered vessel, likely military, danced in his thoughts. If true then this cabin had probably belonged to an officer. Perhaps his enemies had finally made a mistake. Mariners, by nature, as well as necessity, tended to horde an assortment of items for various reasons. They might be curiosities that could be traded or sold, personal objects, or those useful in defense if a ship were unexpectedly boarded. Could there be a hidden cache left behind by the cabin's former occupant?

During his days aboard, Ernest had conducted a brief examination of his temporary home, but then he'd been concerned only with the superficial. At that time the most useful object he'd been able to locate was a corked bottle. He'd momentarily considered using it to convey a message requesting help until the futility of such an action had dawned on him. What could he say? He did not know his heading, destination, the name of the ship he sailed on, or what type of assistance would be most beneficial when the time to escape came. Besides, the endless storm only further elevated his doubts about tossing a letter into the sea. In such conditions, it might travel hundreds of miles before washing ashore or become trapped in the churning currents within the storm.

But now his eyes probed the cabin with a new energy and purpose. The darkness would hinder his progress, but lengthening the time the task would take might at least keep him awake. After taking a moment to decide where he should begin, Ernest set about his chore. He fervently hoped to locate a pistol, his own having been thrown overboard before they'd left the Orkney Islands. True, there were a few other objects in the room that could be used as makeshift weapons, but he doubted any of them would last long in close-quarter combat. If their pursuers caught them and came aboard, they would have no reason to treat him as anything other than a pirate. A pistol would at least give him a chance to defend himself. More importantly, it could also provide him with a means to wrest his fate back

from his captors.

As he searched, Ernest tried to keep dark thoughts at bay. It was difficult. There were too many demons swirling within: past, present, and future. He was accustomed to uncertainty in life, but now that ambiguity was colored by a near crippling grief. The life he and Ailis had fought so hard to create was rent asunder. His loving partner in this world was gone, as was their cherished child. His soul felt shattered. It was poisoned by guilt and grief. Increasingly he felt lost. There would be no future, which left him alone with only the past and present. As in his life before, he was now to be forced, unwillingly, into participating in another pointless battle at sea. And as had happened so many times these past weeks memories, long buried, unbidden, tipped the senses, and there could be no refuge from their influence for Ailis was gone—the horrors of the past and present were free to assault his soul.