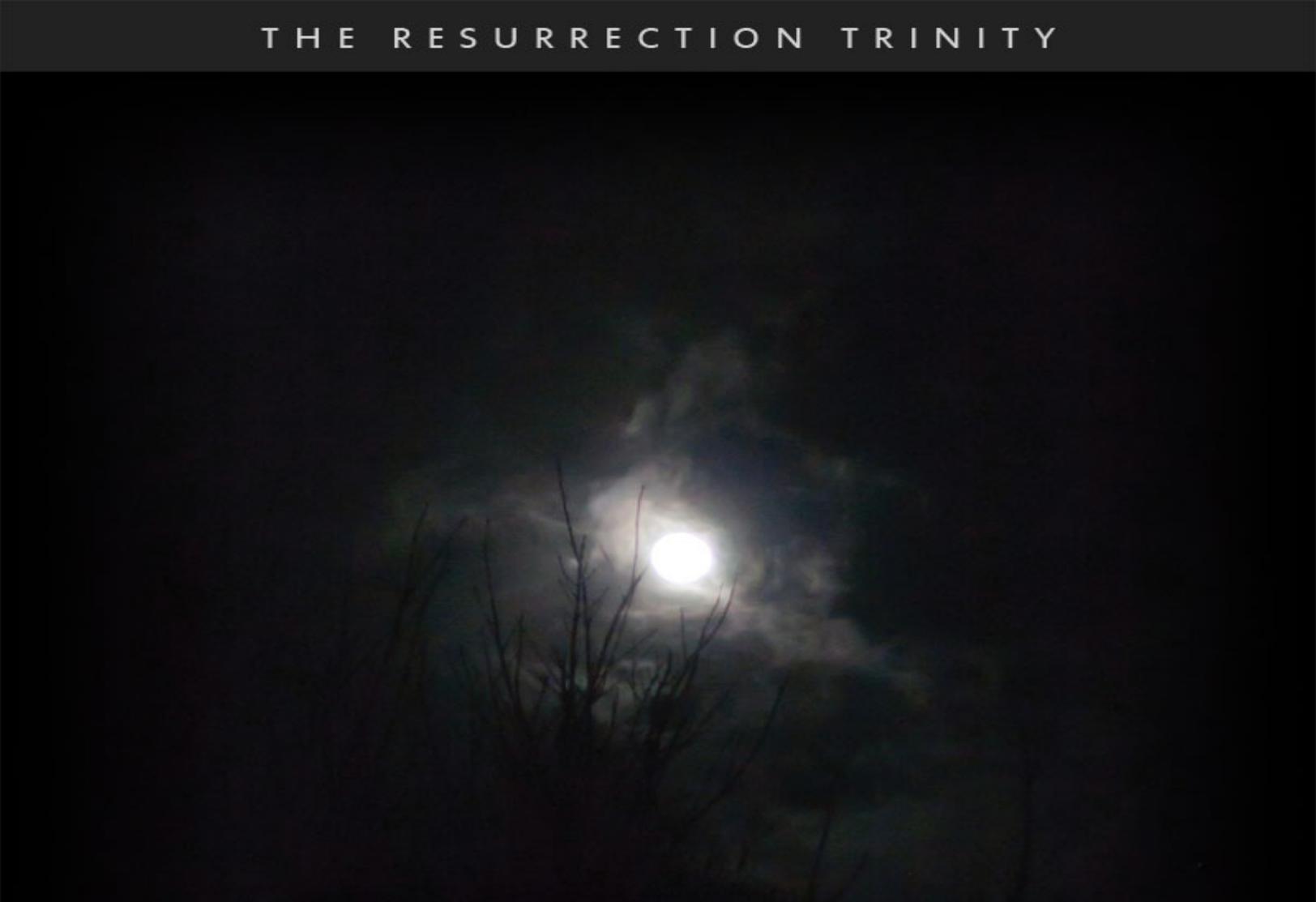


THE RESURRECTION TRINITY



FRANKENSTEIN
A LIFE BEYOND

Book 1 of 3

PETE PLANISEK

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FRANKENSTEIN A LIFE BEYOND

Book 1 of 3

The Resurrection Trinity

PETE PLANISEK

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For Mary

CHARACTERS

Ireland

*Ernest Frankenstein

*Robert Walton

Ailis Tierney Frankenstein

Tara Tierney Frankenstein

Quinn Tierney

Mr. and Mrs. Shaw

Mrs. Kelley

Padric Kelley

Dr. Martin

France

Abrielle

The Moon Shadow clan

*The Creature

Chloe

Geneva

Christiansen

*Caroline Frankenstein – *deceased*

*Alphonso Frankenstein – *deceased*

*William Frankenstein – *deceased*

*Elizabeth Lavenza Frankenstein – *deceased*

*Victor Frankenstein – *deceased*

*Justine Moritz – *deceased*

Salzburg

Jack Clerval

Costanza Clerval

Ingolstadt

*M. Waldman

*M. Krempe

The Wild Rose clan

Jal Nalie

Baseria Nalie

Espen Nalie

Nasi Nalie (*Nagyanya*)

Mayte Nalie – *deceased*

Patia Nalie – *deceased*

Jucika – *deceased*

Etolie

The Moon Shadow clan

Nicabar

Tasaria

Pias

*All characters from Mary Shelly's novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*. Not listed but also referenced/appearing are: Henry Clerval and Robert Walton

“The being who patiently endures injustice, and silently bears insults, will soon become unjust, or unable to discern right from wrong.” – Mary Wollstonecroft

CHAPTER 2

GENEVA

from the journal of Ernest Frankenstein

20 September 1809

I am now only a matter of hours from the city of my birth; yet, all my thoughts tend upon you and your mother. I am homesick and ashamed. I can justify this black pilgrimage to others but find it difficult to convince myself. Your mother understands. She always has. I have no love for the life I abandoned here long ago and do not fully understand the strange circumstances which have conspired to draw me back to this mountainous land. In her wisdom, your mother bade me to keep a record of my journey, and I've no doubt that she will do likewise for you while I am away. She has always been more disciplined in both her desire to write and in her devotion to the needs of others. My poor words could never hope to do justice to the deep and abiding love I feel for her and for you. This is the longest we have been parted since I've known her, and the absence of her presence haunts my steps. A great dread stalks my soul, enabled by a fear I cannot name. And the lonely hours invite regret. She will never know how close I was to not coming.

The days have been hot, but the nights are quite cold. For the sake of speed, I have traveled by horse, alone. I have tried not to think too much about the task ahead, but have spent my hours reconnecting to the once familiar landscape. How strange that mountains and valleys, which are found throughout the world, should vary so widely. Each assemblage brings a unique presence: an echo of ancient times, a rugged secrecy, and the promise of rewarding challenges. It's not just the landscape, of course; the people and creatures that inhabit the lands also alter one's perceptions of a place. As I leave the unmarked boundaries of the French proper, the very scents in the air have awoken long forgotten memories.

I write these words on the shore of a nameless mountain lake, tinged with a blue-green surface, one similar to those my father would often take me fishing in. Though he was primarily a man of public service, he had rough calloused hands from hours spent outdoors: hunting, hiking, fishing, climbing. He introduced me to the subtle joys of nature, especially after the loss of mother and Victor's departure for university in Ingolstadt. My God, it has already been twenty years since mother's death. I am uncertain if I will be able to bring myself to look upon her tomb, to say nothing of the others. The veiled shadows of the mountains have begun to banish the light from this valley, so I will sleep now, and dream of all those I love who are far away.

21 September 1809

I've had the good fortune of locating a hot spring near my campsite this morning. The long days of harried travel across Napoleon's domain has afforded me little time for simple routines, such as bathing. I startled a red fox that was hiding behind a rock near the spring. The nervous animal hissed then vanished from my sight in three great bounds; however, the ibex that were picking through the food at my campsite were not nearly so skittish and left little behind. Hopefully I'll find some farms in the lower altitudes who'll sell me some food.

*

I've arrived at Geneva. It was dusk as I entered the ancient city by the western shoreline of Lac Léman^[1]. I've managed to secure rooms near Christiansen's office and have sent word that I will meet him tomorrow. I am glad that darkness has obscured most of the surrounding landscape. For after all my travels and sufferings, I am now back to the one place on the Earth I have fervently hoped never to return to. In some ways, it is not the same city I left. Time, the dubious French occupation, and my own personal perceptions have marked the place, but in my weary state, my senses shudder in the presence of Geneva.

I will find little rest or comfort here. The great tragedy of our existence is our inability to escape the past. It infects us, bleeds our hearts, and shapes our futures. At this moment, I would gladly play the role of Faustus, if the bargain meant true freedom from the horrors I have outrun for ten years.

*

Why? What mortal sin could justify this? The fatal obsession of my days seems to be fixed. Is it possible? Before leaving Ireland, your mother and I argued about the wisdom of this trip. Now that I am here, I no longer know what to think.

For my own benefit, I will begin with Christiansen's urgent message, that I must come to Geneva for a particular letter, which has been sent to his offices for me. It was unaddressed and must have been hand-delivered to have arrived in such a fashion, but no one apparently witnessed the messenger. The message this letter contains is simple and brief, but those few words have shattered my world:

Brother,

Join me in Geneva.

Victor

**

"I would not have bothered you with such a thing had I not noticed this," Christiansen exclaimed

as he held up paperwork regarding the arrangements of the Frankenstein estate.

For a moment Ernest's eyes failed to see the significance or his heart did not want to acknowledge it. The handwriting for both was identical. Even the letters of the signatures bent and swayed in matching fashion. An icy hand crept up his spine, electrifying Ernest's nerves, freezing his mind.

Christiansen pressed a glass of brandy into the younger man's hand before settling into the chair opposite him. Ernest numbly took a sip from his own glass and gazed out the window towards distant peaks. The brandy helped, and when Christiansen felt his visitor was ready, he continued.

"It was fate," he shrugged.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I only had those estate papers out due to your inheritance request from April," Christiansen explained.

"When did this arrive?" Ernest asked as he held up the letter.

Christiansen rubbed his balding head.

"Early August," he decided. "It probably sat on my desk a day or so and when I discovered ... well, I contacted you as quickly as I could."

His brother's face seemed to float before Ernest. No, not his face; it had been years since he'd been able to recall it clearly. In some ways, it was as if Victor had never truly existed. He'd grown so accustomed to seeing him as nothing more than a shade or faded memory that when Ernest really tried to resurrect his visage, it was like trying to paint upon a canvas with sand. The form was essentially correct, but the details were blurred and obscured.

He firmly set down the glass on Christiansen's desk and studied the letter wordlessly.

"Is there any chance...?" The words left before he could complete the question. Ernest did not even want to look upon his companion's face. As he stood, the bass of Christiansen's smooth, even voice refused to let the thought go unanswered. Ernest smiled inwardly at this well-remembered trait. Maybe it was his lawyer's pride, but he never did allow a question to pass unanswered.

"To date, aside from this letter, there is no conclusive proof. I have made inquiries around Geneva, sent men to your father's house, and posted notices in the local papers. If he is here and, if you will forgive me, wishes to be found, as is alluded to in this letter, then he will reveal himself to us. But I will tell you this, my boy."

His hand settled firmly upon Ernest's shoulder.

"I've learned never to underestimate a Frankenstein."

The paternal grin elicited one from Ernest who relaxed as they chuckled softly. Christiansen took both glasses back to his server and refilled them.

"Imagine," he quipped as he returned Ernest's glass to him, "that anyone would have the nerve to

come to my office and claim to be you, as if I'd fail to recognize my own godchild."

He vigorously shook his head as he took a hasty sip from his glass, continuing before his guest could interject.

"Of course, I was more than a bit surprised by your original letter. Well ... that is to say ... I never would have given you up for dead," he amended brushing at his large, white mustache nervously.

Was this thoughtlessness genuine relief that his godchild was alive or the rantings of a brain unaccustomed to such a generous dose of brandy this early in the morning? His last words resonated within Ernest for he had given Victor up for dead. So was it morbid curiosity or hope that had compelled him to come?

"Have you ever met a man named Robert Walton?"

Christiansen's facial hair enveloped his lips, as he pursed them in thought.

"Walton?"

"He came to see me at the end of July, an Englishman, attached to the British Admiralty, claimed to have been a captain with links to Arctic exploration," Ernest explained, dutifully describing Walton's appearance to Christiansen but unable to bring himself to reveal the nature of the narrative the man had told back in Ireland.

"Ernest, with the number of people who've contacted me over the years regarding your family and its estate ... who knows; I could have spoken to him eight years or eight months ago. I've even had a few people come wearing a disguise ... but why should a wealthy British naval officer go through all that trouble?"

And here was the basic paradox of Ernest's life: only questions, never answers. Christiansen did not press the matter.

"What will you do?"

Ernest finished his drink.

"I would like to proceed with assessing the value of my estate. My wife ..."

"Yes, the family," Christiansen broke in as he returned to the seat behind his desk. Godchild Ernest might be, but this was business. He smoothed his remaining hair and stowed his brandy glass.

"I take it you'll want to inspect the property firsthand?" His left eyebrow rose slightly. Ernest nodded in affirmation. And just like that, he committed to return home but turned down Christiansen's repeated offers to accompany him to the Frankenstein's family's country estate in Belrive. Ernest was unsure how the place would affect him and did not wish to subjugate another to his inner turmoil. Only Ailis engendered enough trust for that.

The men remained together for some time, even taking dinner together in the offices as they

reviewed legal documents, traded stories of Ernest's travels, and recent local history. They largely avoided the topic of Ernest's family history, though he knew Christiansen longed to talk about his parents. He'd known Ernest's father for most of his life and had served as a type of step-uncle to both his godchild and Ernest's brothers.

As he finally took his leave, Christiansen pressed the keys of Ernest's family's former home into his hand.

"I've tried to keep things up, but with the French occupation and ... well," his voice broke only slightly.

His ties to Ernest's family ran deep, as did his devotion. Whatever the estate's condition, he knew Christiansen had done his best. They exchanged a few more pleasantries with Ernest vowing to return in a day or two.

As he walked the streets back to the inn, Ernest was relieved that darkness held the familiar sights of Geneva at bay. It was not until he'd nearly reached his rooms that Ernest realized he'd been unconsciously studying the face of every man he passed looking for his brother, wondering if Victor be there, waiting for him when Ernest returned home?

**

23 September 1809

I was beyond the city walls by the time the sun caught up with the world. Sleep had been only a notion, so rather than indulge my hours in worthless while, I abandoned further pretenses and tried to focus my mind on what was to come.

I plan to remain a day or so, alone, at the house. I call it a house, but to me, it is no more than an extension of a vast tomb, one which houses memory, time, and the lost hope of my family and friends. I have seen the worst of humankind in my travels, spent untold hours in the cemetery where Quinn Tierney now sleeps, and in my journeys faced my own death untold times, but the thought of entering the house made my spirit tremble and my senses dull. Fearful that my resolve would fail me, I dressed and roused the innkeeper to pay my bill. The cool darkness of the slumbering city revived me. The blackness provided a sense of anonymity, and for a few precious moments, I was unshackled and my mind replayed the vast star fields I witnessed in the night sky during my years at sea. Strange how such an unyielding environment can harbor such beautiful treasures. Some nights the cold comfort of the stars has been my only solace, the only calm place of order in a life of chaos; their mystic fires burn undisturbed by the passions of our brief existence.

Though I left Geneva early, I did not manage to arrive at my home until quite late. I deliberately traveled a winding path, one which over the course of the day, afforded me long forgotten views of

the ancient peaks of the Juras chain to the north, of Mount Selve on the city's southern boarder, and of the towering Alps of the Savoy. The majestic, frigid heights of "the white lady," Mount Blanc, held me transfixed for some time.

I walked through a land of shadows: the rock where my mother once gave me an early reading lesson, the trail to the boat docks near Coligny, the field in Plainpalais where William's shattered body was discovered. The image of my brother's blue eyes and curled hair passes unbidden before my eyes. We'd been at play, some sort of hiding game, when he vanished. We parted vowing that neither would ever find the other. And that was the last time I ever saw him alive. After a lengthy search, Father discovered him and then bore his body to the house early the next morning. Though the land is now clearly in autumn's withering embrace, my mind only replayed that summer day so long ago, and all I could smell were wildflowers.

When I finally arrived at the house, we silently regarded the changes to one another. Windows were broken or patched, decaying curtains hung asunder, an assortment of ivy, weeds, and grasses choked the lawn as well as Mother's once prized flower beds. The deplorable sight of my once safe and familiar home holds little emotion for me now. It is an empty shell, as I feel I have been for most of my life. My only interests in it lie in using it to secure the financial future of my family. It is ancillary to the true purpose of my visit. I turned my back to it and made for a small, gated plot of land near the woods.

The graves stood in long shadows as the fading light cast them into gloom. The headstones, or what I could see of them beneath the heavy growth, stood as silent sentinels adhering to their macabre duty. They have remained faithful. I have not. The corrupting effects that time worked upon the stones portends to what it has done to those at rest in the soft earth below. There, alone in the shadows, I, the last living Frankenstein, tended to the dead.

One by one, I cleared the stones of the decaying, encroaching debris, and allowed my heart to embrace each name my efforts revealed: Caroline Frankenstein, Alphonso Frankenstein, William Frankenstein, and Elizabeth Frankenstein. I paused a long time before clearing the fifth and final remaining grave. I could not even bring myself to look upon the name etched into that stone. I have never approved of its inclusion, and its occupant still arouses painfully intense feelings of love, anguish, and shame within me. Befittingly, briar rose bushes have encamped themselves nearby, ensuring that my hands were pricked and bloodied by the time I finished my grim task.

The light was vanishing rapidly now. I knelt before the graves, my surging emotions blending with a silent prayer. My senses turned inward to a rush of images, sounds, smells, and sensations richly preserved in long buried memories. All the people who had made my life real, who'd shaped and created my sense of purpose in the days of my youth, lay massacred beneath me. Here, before them,

the silence was deafening. Tears mingled with blood as I passed my hands over my face. The man before them bears little resemblance to the boy who failed them and fled so long ago. Do they know that I died and have been resurrected by your mother's love? And what of Victor? Has his destiny been fulfilled in a frozen Arctic wasteland as Walton contends? Or is he here, alive, hidden for some as yet unknown purpose? I crave your mother's gentle spirit for no answers can come from the dead. Still, I hope that my pilgrimage will allow them to relinquish their grasp on me.

The stress and fatigue of the day finally overwhelmed me. With the last muted hints of daylight, I returned to the house and stole a quick glance at the family crest above the entry. The door was locked, but that formality had apparently been overcome many times. Inside, the dust lay as thick as snow in some places, while others attested to the recent presence of both man and beast in the house. I managed to locate an odd candle or two and began to explore the dark, musty chambers.

Rats and field mice have picked the kitchen clean. Some rooms are ransacked, while others remain as pristine as the day I abandoned them. At some point (I'm guessing French soldiers) used one of the larger fireplaces as a privy. Fortunately, the only occupant I found was a raccoon, though I've heard bats flapping about in the darkness around me. I discovered my old room was basically intact and sank mercifully onto my rank smelling bed. It shifted to the left and broke almost immediately. I tried to sleep on the floor, but incessant insect bites, most likely fleas, made this a rather uncomfortable option. Finally, I returned to the listing bed and became one with the darkness.

Dawn was grey and brought no comfort. I set about the task of assessing my property. Perhaps it was the unresolved matter of Victor or maybe the nearness of my family's graves, but as I moved from empty room to empty room, I became aware of a presence—watching me. I tried ignoring it, confronting it, and finally with no evidence that it was anything more real than my imagination, simply banished it from my thoughts. This task I must complete is for you and your mother. I will not allow phantoms to deter me; at least, none from the present.

As I encountered them though, certain objects and spaces took on a life of their own. My father's writing desk still smells of amaretto flavored pipe tobacco, and the top left-hand drawer still contained his journal. A journal he will never write in again. He'd been doing so when Victor returned with Elizabeth's body. I turned to the final entry and noticed how the last words trailed off, as the small sense of normality we'd fought so hard to regain was obliterated in that horrible moment. I left the room and took his journal with me, though I doubt I'll ever be able to bring myself to read it.

My mother's spirit still resides in the small bedroom, at the back of the house, where she passed, quietly of scarlet fever. The bed she died in was never used again, and oddly enough, it was one of the few rooms uncorrupted by either thievery or time. The floorboards near the bed still creak, and the dried flowers that Elizabeth brought her remain on the nightstand. My mother died while far too

young and left all but her oldest child with a loss from which we could never recover. All of us mourned her, except Victor, who left for university in Ingolstadt not long after her death and immersed himself in study. He rarely returned or corresponded until William's death brought him home. It was as if we did not exist to him all those years. He never saw how the loss of Mother affected the rest of us. And he seemed mostly indifferent to the fact that his prolonged absence from our lives caused additional sorrows; though in the end, his own return resulted in nothing but heartache and death.

With William, I feel the strongest connections, either when I am outside or among the myriad of hiding places we used over the years; my poor, dear brother who never had a chance to grow up. He would have been brilliant, and his stubbornness unrivaled, except perhaps by Victor's. Thank God for Elizabeth's maternal presence. I don't think Father and I could have handled William by ourselves.

The library was by far the coldest room I entered. When I tried to draw back the curtains and allow the scant daylight into the room, it resulted in the final disintegration of the aged, decorative cloth. It was here that I felt the strongest connection to Elizabeth. She spent untold hours here, immersed in the minds of Dante, Milton, Plato, and Virgil. She was raised as my sister, though no blood tie existed. Her romantic nature flourished among the pages she read, and it was she who finished my schooling. Her gentleness, love, and strength of spirit kept our family going through the dark years after Mother's death. And it was Elizabeth's loss that shattered the Frankenstein household forever.

When I realized that the daylight would be gone soon and I'd brought little in the way of food, I decided to save my survey of the outer buildings until tomorrow. Three rooms remain for me to visit here in the house also, but I must admit, I dread the demons each of these might hold. Still, they wait for me, and despite my misgivings, I know they too will be visited tomorrow. With limited options, I headed for the nearest residence I could remember.

The LaShalls were once close to my parents but grew more distant after the death of my mother. So it was no great shock when they found my purported identity more than a little ostentatious. In the end, we passed a pleasant but equally awkward evening together. I left knowing they did not believe that Ernest Frankenstein had come to visit. They both well knew that he and everyone else in that cursed family were long since dead. But at least they were willing to feed me. I think the money I paid them for the food helped.

I returned to my mirthless estate and attempted to pen a letter to your mother in the murky surroundings. Were it not for the light of the full moon and flickering candles keeping the phantoms at bay, it would not be hard to imagine that I've joined my family in the grave. Dark thoughts tend me in those lonely hours. And I ponder how this house ever felt inviting. Several times noises have cried out from the dark, unseen corners of the house. I dismiss these as best I can, though with a growing

sense of unease.

Man's worst enemy is often his own imagination, and as such, only nightmares found me last night. I remember few of them, but one image fixes itself to my mind, as it has often done for many years. The most repugnant aspect of this image is that it once greeted me in life before it crossed into the realm of nightmare. I witnessed it in my youth. The image of Justine Moritz's eyes before the gallows's door opened beneath her feet. Right before she was hung for the murder of my dear brother, William. She is the first woman I ever loved and the final grave I uncovered in my family's cemetery.

[1]Lake Geneva