



*The  
Dare*

## 1818 Briefing

Welcome to *The Dare*. You will play the five Romantic writers who stayed at Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva in Switzerland in 1816--which resulted in the ground-breaking novel *Frankenstein*. 1816 came to be known as the Year Without a Summer. Young, intellectual and brave (or stupid) they sought to throw off the chains of polite society: questioning the sanctity of marriage and embracing what they called "free love", rebelling against aristocratic privilege and hierarchal society (while benefiting from the wealth and freedom it accorded many of them) and championing equality for women (while living lives that undermined the choice and freedom of many of the women in this very circle).

There were two versions of *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, published. The first in 1818, was published anonymously with an introduction by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Many wrongly thought Percy Shelley was the author. This was published at the height of their Romantic aspirations--after Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley had married Percy and become Mary Shelley, while Byron and Percy were alive and planning the publication of a magazine, *The Liberal*, to put forward socially liberal political ideals.

The second edition, with revisions by Mary Shelley was published in 1831, after the death of many of her children and her beloved husband Percy. *Frankenstein*, despite critical reservations, was an immediate popular success, adapted for the stage during Mary's lifetime and has been presented in film, novel and every form that media has to offer.

In playing this game, you will take on the roles of these writers and also play out pieces of the fiction--some of which was written during this summer, some of which was inspired at that time but came to pass later.

There are two version of the game. This, the 1818 version focuses on the many works that came into being that summer. Letting us experience the other works inspired on that cold, frightening summer in the shadow of war and on the cusp of our modern era.

Four of the artists wrote significant pieces: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin with *Frankenstein*, Lord Byron with *The Prisoner of Chillon*, John Polidori with *The Vampyre*, and Percy Shelley with *A Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*.

What if each work became as famous as *Frankenstein*? If *The Vampyre* become the model for seductive vampires, and Lord Ruthven's name obscured *Dracula*? If the *Prisoner of Chillon* a fundamental statement on imprisonment and rebellion? If the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* was the foundation for a high appreciation for the pursuit of thought and knowledge?

Scene structure:

Whist Introductory Warm-up

The Dare – Byron challenges everyone to write a ghost story

Writing Scenes: each author gives a monologue about their inspiration, then directs two scenes – the scenes are played out by the other players, with no words.

Interludes: Claire chooses scenes about the authors' lives, uses Meta-techniques with GMs

Laudanum Scene: Claire chooses an author to give Laudanum, they dream and are joined by creatures of their works and the other authors

Epilogue: what could these works have inspired?



**Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin** (age 18), author of *Frankenstein*, Percy's lover  
*A brilliant, intense and quiet woman. Devoted lover and mother, wants to live up to legacy of her family.*

Feminist author, known for her novel *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*. Lover and mother of several children, with Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Mary's father was writer William Godwin, who criticized aristocratic privilege and was an early proponent of anarchism. Her mother was Feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of Women's Rights* which asserted equality. Mary and Percy, at the time of this game, have a 6 month old child William (called "Wilmouse"), though they are together un-wed, and fleeing England to avoid Percy's legal wife and his family's disapproval of their union. Mary and Percy embrace "free love", with Percy fathering children with both women, and possibly taking Mary's step-sister Claire as a lover. Mary Shelley espoused these values, but likely never took another lover. Died at the age of 53 of a brain tumor.

Percy: the love of her life

Byron: notorious figure, now friend & mentor

Claire: beloved sister and tagalong

John: a new friend, an untried artist

**Percy Bysshe Shelley** (age 26) Mary's lover



*Unorthodox thinker, and prolific writer. Deeply emotional and impulsive. Commits to support his many lovers and beloveds financially.*

Brilliant poet and thinker of his era. Met Mary and her family through seeking mentoring from William Godwin. Fell madly in love with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin upon meeting her, threatening suicide if she did not return his love--despite his own marriage. Luckily, she did, and they embarked on a wild, idealistic, unconventional love affair that took Percy from his wife, and into the arms of other lovers including (possibly) Mary's step-sister, Claire Clairmont. Mary and Percy, at the time of this game, have a 6 month old child William (called "Wilmouse"), though they are together un-wed, and fleeing England to avoid Percy's legal wife and his family's disapproval of their union. Died in boating

accident in 1822.

Mary: the love of his life, among many lovers

Byron: notorious figure, now fast friend

Claire: such a close companion, not Mary's match

John: a young upstart, can he measure up?

**Claire Clairmont** (age 18, aka Mary Jane Godwin) Mary's step-sister and former lover of Byron



*Beautiful and headstrong young woman. Grew up among great thinkers and yearns for recognition and acclaim.*

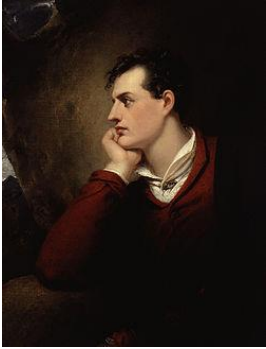
Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's step-sister. Well-educated and raised in the same intellectual circles as Mary, Claire was fluent in five languages including French and Polish. Aspiring writer and sometime lover of Byron. Introduced Percy Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin to Byron as inducement for him to allow her to stay with him. Pregnant during the Haunted Summer--to Byron's surprise! Carried his daughter Allegra, who was taken from her by the father. Came to regret the abuses of 'free love', and lost her child to illness in a convent where she was secluded by her father. Outlived all the rest of this party, supported in party by a pension from Percy Shelley.

Mary: my beloved sister, always outshining me

Byron: he will surely love me and our child

Percy: my beloved companion, so thoughtful

John: talented, takes good care of my Byron



**George Gordon, Lord Byron** (age 28), the host at Villa Diodati

*Iconic rebel and outcast. Charismatic and brilliant. Fashionable, but self-conscious about his club foot. Devoted friend but can be patronizing.*

Byron is a notorious poet and writer of the Victorian era. Born to wealth and a Baron's title but with an absent father and mother who struggled with mental illness, he grew up rejecting the standard values of society. A world traveler, sexual adventurer (with men and women) and political rebel, he was a leader in fashion and intellectual pursuits despite being rejected by the establishment and pursued by the law for debt. Byron became fast friends with Mary and Percy. Fathered child with Claire Clairmont despite their age difference and his relative indifference to her. Died in the Greek fight for independence.

Mary: a brilliant mind, fun to draw out

Percy: such a kindred spirit, he'll go far

Claire: keeps hanging onto our past love

John: a talented doctor, could he be a creative equal?



**John William Polidori** (age 20) Byron's physician and would-be protégé.

*Advanced in studies for his age and hopeful of reaching heights in his career.*

Received his doctorate of medicine at the exceptionally early age of 19, with a thesis on sleep-walking. Looking to be inspired and raised in status by his relationship with Byron. Intrigued by ideas of free love. He would become the uncle by marriage of poets Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Rossetti--though they were born after his death of poison at the age of 26.

Mary: brilliant product of her family

Byron: my patron and model, such a life he lives

Percy: a dreamer and a radical

Claire: beautiful but so obsessed with Byron

## Background

Romantic writers gather in Lake Geneva, Switzerland: Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (she would marry Shelley later that year), Claire Clairmont and John Polidori. It is 1816--the haunted summer when the sun barely shines and snow falls in June and July. People fear famine, with Europe still recovering from the end of the Napoleonic wars. The Romantics look to the realm of emotion for inspiration to make Great Art. These artists read ghost stories and embark on making their own creations--including *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *The Vampyre* by John Polidori.

In this game, players take the roles of these creators in their tangled emotional web, as well as the characters from their works of art. In dreams, the authors must face their own creations, as well as their own fears.

## The Setting



### Villa Diodati, on Lake Geneva

A mansion in Cologny, Switzerland rented by George Gordon Byron, or Lord Byron, in the summer of 1816 to escape scandals and debt in England. Formerly owned by the family of Charles Diodati (a close friend of the poet John Milton), it is in view of Lake Geneva. The game takes place in the parlor and private spaces of Villa Diodati. Also with them that summer are Mary and Percy's 6 month old child, several servants, five dogs, seven cats, a monkey and a peacock at the Villa.



### Maison Chapuis.

House on Lake Geneva near Villa occupied by the Shelleys and Claire Clairmont during the haunted summer. Much more modest dwelling. During the events of the game, Wilmore (Mary and Percy's 6 month old son), is at Maison Chapuis with a nurse.

## **The War**

With the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the Napoleonic wars had just ended. These conflicts killed 1.7 million soldiers in France, nearly 2 million in Britain, Russia, Spain and others opposing the new French Empire, and countless civilians. This war changed the face of war in the world--countries fielded massive armies on a scale never seen before, casualties from disease and famine expanded the scope of war losses, and rising nationalism made these wars between peoples, not just rulers. It introduced the concept of Total War--targeting civilian infrastructure--which presaged the US Civil War and the World Wars of the early 20th century. The mood in Europe was joyful but shell-shocked.

## **Romanticism**

A movement of the arts that focused on the individual, intuition and strong emotions. A reaction to the rational emphasis of the Neo-Classical thought of the Enlightenment Era. With a nostalgia for Medieval culture, raising it above the rationalism of science and philosophy from the Classical Greek and Roman periods. Also reacting to the modernization of society, and the heralds of the coming global industrialization.

Heroic individuals were thought to raise society up with them, and the spontaneous expression of emotion was prized, especially strong feelings such as horror and awe. Individual, original genius was seen as the be-all and end-all, with un-original work held in contempt. The mysterious workings of nature were idealized and seen as a refuge and source of inspiration. Sex and drugs were indulged in. Feverish images from laudanum induced dreams such as Percy Shelley's dream of Mary with eyes in her breasts, and hysterical fits such as Claire Clairmont's overwhelm on behalf of the character Cordelia when they read Shakespeare's play *King Lear*.

Poets and writers who embraced Romanticism such as Byron and the Shelleys, questioned social and political institutions of the monarchy, patriarchy and marriage. However, they and other thinkers from this era came from privilege of race and class, and often failed to question these inequities.

## **Free Love**

Throwing off the institution of marriage to sanction sex and intimacy. Championed by Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and embraced, at times, by Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (Shelley) and Claire Clairmont. Byron had relationships with men and women, including those married. Exact relationships are unclear, but Percy Shelley continued his relationship with his legal wife, Harriet Westbrook, while living and travelling with Mary Godwin. His close relationship with Claire Clairmont indicates that they were lovers, though this was denied by Mary in her personal writings. Percy encouraged Mary to have relationships with others, but it is not clear that she did so. Clairmont in particular wrote bitterly about free love's excesses and blamed it for much pain in her life, such as losing custody of her daughter Allegra. Byron's life was a string of relationships--appropriately immortalized in his version of *Don Juan*, including--possibly--with his half-sister, that left a wreckage of scandal and hard feelings in his wake.

## **The Year without a Summer - 1816**

Also known as the Poverty Year, low temperatures caused snow in June, loss of crops, famine and poverty throughout Europe and the world. Caused by the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia, unseasonable cold shocked the world and caused panic and revolt. Europe, recovering from the losses of the Napoleonic Wars was doubly devastated.

## SCENE SUGGESTIONS - 1818 VERSION

Claire's player looks over these scenes relating to the characters.

Choose three to be played out between the author's writing scenes.

The player of Claire Clairmont will work with GMs to choose when these are played, and use Meta-techniques to enrich scenes.

Play of Scenes:

- Players take the role of their main character. Other players or GMs play additional characters.
  - The GMs and Claire set the scene when this is played out.
  - Players can use dialogue during these scenes.
  - Claire can call for Inner Monologue, provide direction with Bird in Ear, or call for brief Flash-forwards or Flashbacks. May pass off these powers if Claire is in the scene.
  - The GMs will end the scene when the events described have taken place.
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### 1. *Flashback*

Claire translates for Percy and Mary on a trip through France - Traveling through the country following the end of the war. They encounter soldiers trying to find their way home. The soldiers threaten them for their food and money.

**Cast:**

Claire, Percy, Mary, Soldiers

### 2. *Flashback*

Mary, Percy and Claire at an Inn in Switzerland. Claire, recently knowing she is pregnant, is recovering from a hysterical fit on behalf of feelings for Cordelia in King Lear being exiled and losing her inheritance. They read that Byron is at Lake Geneva and Claire convinces the others she will introduce them and they should all stay there together.

**Cast:**

Claire, Percy, Mary

### 3. *Present (at Lake Geneva)*

Claire telling Byron that she is pregnant with his child - Claire begins by trying to seduce him, Byron is cold and dismissive. Then she breaks the news.

**Cast:**

Claire, Byron

### 4. *Present (at Lake Geneva)*

Byron and Percy get the idea for forming their *Liberal* magazine - The whole group is together, talking late into the night. Percy and Byron discuss conservative English journals like Blackwood Magazine called the Romantic writers influenced by Byron the "Cockney School of Poetry." They get the idea to start their own, called *The Liberal*.

**Cast:**

Byron, Percy, Claire, Mary, John

### 1. *Flashback*

Byron and John are in England waiting for their ship to cross from Dover to France and Europe. They dine with fashionable friends of Byron's, and John offers a play he is working on for Byron to look over. Byron cannot help but make fun of it.

**Cast:**

Byron and John

### 2. *Flashback*

The death of Mary and Percy's first born child, Clara - Mary awakes in the night worrying about their prematurely born child. Percy comforts her. They discover together that the child has stopped breathing.

**Cast:**

Mary and Percy

### 3. *Present (at Lake Geneva)*

The group explores Free Love, with some failures - In the Villa Diodati, Percy leaves Mary's room to go join Claire down by the lake. John sees Percy and asks him if Mary is "free." Percy encourages him to approach her. Mary turns him down.

**Cast:**

Percy, Claire, John, Mary

### 4. *Present (at Lake Geneva)*

Percy and Byron are up early in the morning to go out hunting. Percy admits his fears of failure to Byron. Byron has faith in Percy and tells him so. John wakes first and joins them. The ladies wake, too and they all go out into the dawn together.

**Cast:**

Byron, Percy, John, Mary, Claire

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bird-in-Ear</b></p> <p>Actions or emotions for a character, given as direction for play.</p> <p>For example, in a scene between Claire and Byron, when she tells him that the child is his, saying to Byron “how can you be sure it is yours?”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>META-TECHNIQUE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Monologue</b></p> <p>Call for pause in play.</p> <p>Ask A player to tell character’s internal thoughts in response to events of play, or ask a question for them to answer.</p> <p>For example, Polidori is working on idea Byron gave him for The Vampyre, ask Percy “Why do you think Lord Ruthven has such resemblance to Byron?”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>META-TECHNIQUE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Flashback</b></p> <p>Call for pause in play.</p> <p>Ask players to act out events from character’s past.</p> <p>For example, “show us how Percy told Mary she must love him or he would die, beside her mother’s grave.”</p> <p>Keep brief.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>META-TECHNIQUE</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Flash Forward</b></p> <p>Call for pause in play.</p> <p>Ask players to act out event from the future, either from history, or as characters may imagine things to occur.</p> <p>For example, asking Mary and Claire to play out happy moments from Claire and Mary’s (imaginary) shared wedding day with Percy and Byron.</p> <p>Or, have Mary play out learning that Percy’s ship has gone down, as occurred historically.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>META-TECHNIQUE</b></p>		



# LORD BYRON

This poem was written by Byron during the summer of 1816. You'll direct the other players as they act out events from it silently.

- Read through all the scenes and choose two to play out. Circle those numbers.
- When it is time to play the scene, choose a player to take the role of each listed character.
- With GM's help, describe where the scene is set and place players in relation to one another.
- At the start of the first scene, give a brief monologue about the author getting the idea for the work.
- Read the italicized text aloud. This is a quote from the work itself.
- Each scene is described in a series of sentences. Read each sentence aloud as directions for the player. Pause to give them time to act each out before going on to the next. Players mime actions, with no dialogue. GMs provide additional direction.
- Add details to the action. Feel free to tie in contemporary or period events.

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## The Prisoner of Chillon

1. *"We were seven who now are one,  
Six in youth, and one in age,  
Finish'd as they had begun,  
Proud of Persecution's rage;  
One in fire, and two in field,  
Their belief with blood have seal'd,  
Dying as their father died,"*

**Cast:**  
The Prisoner  
His father  
Brothers

The six brothers and their father stand up for their beliefs against society. Their father is burned at the stake before them. Two brothers die burned with their father. One dies fighting for his freedom. Three were imprisoned in Chillon, in a cell sunk beneath the lake, with just one high window.

2. *"I was the eldest of the three  
And to uphold and cheer the rest  
I ought to do and did my best  
And each did well in his degree."*

**Cast:**  
The Prisoner  
Youngest Bro.  
Hunter Brother

The three brothers chained in prison with the narrator in the middle. The prisoner tries to cheer the other two, and they keep each other company. The quiet, intense hunter brother, suffers from lack of air and light. The youngest, gentle and optimistic brother grows sadder and despairing. The hunter brother dies. Then the youngest brother dies as well.

3. *"There were no stars, no earth, no time,  
No check, no change, no good, no crime  
But silence, and a stirless breath  
Which neither was of life nor death;  
A sea of stagnant idleness,  
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless!"*

**Cast:**  
The Prisoner  
The Bird  
The Jail

The narrator is left alone, in the dark. He loses all sense of time, and even of who he is. He is brought back by the first sound he has heard in the cell: the song of a bird. Eventually, many years on, his chain weakens, and his jailers don't fix it. He climbs to the window and sees the mountains. His hair is now as white as their snowy peaks.

4. *"In quiet we had learn'd to dwell;  
My very chains and I grew friends,  
So much a long communion tends  
To make us what we are: even I  
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh."*

**Cast:**  
The Prisoner  
Mice, a spider  
The Jailers

The days go by unmarked except by the passing of night and day. The Prisoner watches mice play, spiders weave. He gains peace. When at last the jailors come to remove him, he does not know what to do in the world. He is thrown forth, free, into the unknown.

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**Notes on the poem:** it was inspired by Byron's visit to the Chateau de Chillon, where a monk was imprisoned underground in the 16th century during struggles in the Protestant Reformation.

# MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN

This novel was begun by Mary during the summer of 1816. You'll direct the other players as they act out events from it silently.

- Read through all the scenes and choose two to play out. Circle those numbers.
- When it is time to play the scene, choose a player to take the role of each listed character.
- With GM's help, describe where the scene is set and place players in relation to one another.
- At the start of the first scene, give a brief monologue about the author getting the idea for the work.
- Read the italicized text aloud. This is a quote from the work itself.
- Each scene is described in a series of sentences. Read each sentence aloud as directions for the player. Pause to give them time to act each out before going on to the next. Players mime actions, with no dialogue. GMs provide additional direction.
- Add details to the action. Feel free to tie in contemporary or period events.

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## Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus

1. *"No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source..."*

Victor Frankenstein, studying to become a doctor, becomes obsessed with the idea of bringing dead flesh back to life. Doing this work, he ignores his family, including his foster sister and beloved, Elizabeth. At last he is successful and sees the creature breath. But he becomes terrified and flees. His friend Henry Clerval finds him and tends him through a nervous breakdown. They return to university together. Victor learns that his younger brother William has been killed. Victor knows in his heart that it was the creature.

### Cast:

Victor, the Creature (Adam), Elizabeth, Henry

2. *"I will revenge my injuries: if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear; and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred."*

The creature corners Victor and describes its suffering and loneliness. He murdered Victor's brother William for revenge. Compares itself to Adam in Eden, but with no loving Creator. Adam swears to exile itself from humanity if Victor makes a mate, like Eve. Victor hesitates, then promises. Victor returns home, suffering from illness and distress. His Father, to help steady him, suggests that he and Elizabeth marry after he finishes his studies. Victor returns to school, then travels to Scotland. There he finds an island only he inhabits, and begins his work on the creature's mate.

### Cast:

Victor, the Creature/Adam, Father, Elizabeth

3. *"Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless, and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! my creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit!"*

Victor has made a mate for the Creature, Adam. Victor contemplates what her life will be like. Will she love Adam? Will she turn from him to the superior beauty of humanity? Will she do great evil, too? Adam finds them but when Victor sees him, he is overcome with anger and fury and destroys the companion tearing her apart. Adam rails in anger, begs and threatens Victor to repair her. Frankenstein refuses and Adam vows to be there at Victor's wedding day. Adam departs and Victor sinks the remains of the companion in the ocean.

4. *"My rage is unspeakable, when I reflect that the murderer, whom I have turned loose upon society, still exists...I have but one resource; and I devote myself, either in my life or death, to his destruction."*

On their wedding day, Elizabeth and Victor go to an inn in the countryside together. Victor is fearful of Adam and checks the Inn. But while he does so Adam enters Elizabeth's room and strangles her. Victor returns home to his family, and finally tells the truth about Adam's origin to a Magistrate investigating the crime. He is believed, but Victor enters a manic state of rage and vengeance.

### Cast:

Victor, Elizabeth, the Creature/Adam, Magistrate

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**Notes on the novel:** Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin had heard of Galvani's work with dissection and electricity to animate limbs. Even her mother's life may have contributed: she was "brought back to life" by onlookers knowledgeable in resuscitation after a second attempt at suicide by drowning.

# JOHN POLIDORI

This story was begun by John during the summer of 1816. You'll direct the other players as they act out events from it silently.

- Read through all the scenes and choose two to play out. Circle those numbers.
- When it is time to play the scene, choose a player to take the role of each listed character.
- With GM's help, describe where the scene is set and place players in relation to one another.
- At the start of the first scene, give a brief monologue about the author getting the idea for the work.
- Read the italicized text aloud. This is a quote from the work itself.
- Each scene is described in a series of sentences. Read each sentence aloud as directions for the player. Pause to give them time to act each out before going on to the next. Players mime actions, with no dialogue. GMs provide additional direction.
- Add details to the action. Feel free to tie in contemporary or period events.

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## The Vampyre

1. *"Those who felt this sensation of awe, could not explain whence it arose: some attributed it to the dead grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, did..at one glance to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart... His peculiarities caused him to be invited to every house;"*

The eccentric Lord Ruthven is received enthusiastically by bored London society. Everyone wants his attention. He spurns Lady Mercer with an outrageous reputation, but secretly spends time with young virtuous women. Young Aubrey comes to London. Orphaned and left a great fortune along with his sister, he is idealistic and innocent. Aubrey is drawn to Ruthven, and finds that the Lord needs financial support. Ruthven and Aubrey become inseparable. Ruthven ruins many young men and fathers at the gambling table. The women in his life begin acting wantonly.

**Cast:**

Lord Ruthven, Society, Lady Mercer, Younger women, Aubrey, Ruined men

2. *"She detailed to him the traditional appearance of these monsters [the vampyres], and his horror was increased, by hearing a pretty accurate description of Lord Ruthven;"*

Aubrey and Ruthven travel Rome and part ways. Aubrey moves on to Greece to see the ruins. He befriends a Greek girl Ianthe. Aubrey falls in love with her. She tells him tales of vampyres who seduce and destroy lives...reminding him of Lord Ruthven. She tells warns him to stay away from a site of vampire orgies. He goes anyway and is caught in a storm. When he returns, Ianthe is cold and still, with the mark of teeth on her neck. Aubrey falls ill and begs in his fever for Ianthe's life to be spared by Lord Ruthven. She dies. Ruthven arrives in Greece at that time, and tends to Aubrey during his illness, turning away all visitors.

**Cast:**

Aubrey, Ruthven, Ianthe, Vampires (in Ianthe's tales)

3. *"Swear!" cried the dying [Ruthven], raising himself with exultant violence, "Swear by all your soul reveres, by all your nature fears, swear that, for a year and a day you will not impart your knowledge of my crimes or death to any living being in any way, whatever may happen, or whatever you may see." "I swear!" said Aubrey; [Ruthven] sunk laughing upon his pillow, and breathed no more."*

Aubrey heals from his grief and illness in Greece. Ruthven stays with him. Aubrey's mind is weakened, and he sees visions of his beloved Ianthe with a cut on her neck. One day when traveling with Ruthven, they are set upon by bandits and the Lord is shot. He makes Aubrey swear he will not reveal that the Lord has died to those in London. Aubrey swears. The next day, Ruthven's body disappears.

**Cast:**

Aubrey, Ruthven, Dream Ianthe, Bandits

4. *"When [Aubrey]..perceived a locket upon her breast; opening it, what was his surprise at beholding the features of the monster who had so long influenced his life."*

Aubrey returns to his sister in England. He is depressed, with no care for his appearance. Lord Ruthven appears at a party but Aubrey feels unnaturally bound by his oath to say nothing. He finds he cannot speak to his sister or anyone of the danger of Ruthven. Aubrey's behavior grows worse until he is confined and thought mad. Ruthven woos Miss Aubrey and convinces her to marry him. After the marriage, Aubrey has a fit and is finally able to speak, telling this tale. He dies, and Miss Aubrey is also found dead. Ruthven disappears.

**Cast:**

Aubrey, Miss Aubrey, Party goers, Ruthven,

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**Notes on the story:** Ruthven's scandals resemble Byron's. This story was initially thought to be written by Byron, but both men affirmed John's authorship.

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# PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

This poem was written by Percy during the summer of 1816. You'll direct the other players as they act out events from it silently. This is the most abstract of the pieces written. The GMs are ready to help work with you to bring it into play.

- Read through all the scenes and choose two to play out. Circle those numbers.
- When it is time to play the scene, choose a player to take the role of each listed character.
- With GM's help, describe where the scene is set and place players in relation to one another.
- At the start of the first scene, give a brief monologue about the author getting the idea for the work.
- Read the italicized text aloud. This is a quote from the work itself.
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## Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

1. *"The awful shadow of some unseen Power  
Floats though unseen among us; visiting  
This various world with as inconstant wing  
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower;  
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower"*

The manifestation of Intellectual Beauty walks the world unseen. She bestows grace to human hearts and minds. Intellectual Beauty scatters itself through the world like stars showing between clouds at night. It enters the world like music half remembered. Humans value it for its scarcity and fleeting nature.

**Cast:**

Manifestation of Intellectual Beauty, humans in the world, clouds & stars

2. *"Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,  
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?"*

Humans are brought to a state of grace by Intellectual Beauty, but it cannot last. Fear and Anxiety take the place of Intellectual Beauty's knowledge and understanding. Humans' experiences of death, birth, love and hate shake off their love for knowledge. Religion enters in with stories of Demons and Hell. The Holy Ghost and Heaven provide solace, peace and faith to fearful humans. But the true path to immortality and freedom is pursuit of intellect and truth.

**Cast:**

Intellectual Beauty, Humans, Religion/Holy Ghost, Demons

3. *"I vow'd that I would dedicate my powers  
To thee and thine: have I not kept the vow?  
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now"*

The narrator, when a child, explored caves, ruins and starlit forests, searching for spirits of the dead, and calling upon angels and the name of God to show him the truth. When there was no answer, he had a vision of the power of knowledge in the systems of nature. He pledged his life to following reason and science.

**Cast:**

Narrator, Trees, (the idea of) God, Intellectual Beauty

4. *"Thus let thy power, which like the truth  
Of nature on my passive youth  
Descended, to my onward life supply  
Its calm, to one who worships thee."*

The narrator spends his life studying natural laws, and learning about the world from philosophy and science. He is dedicated to the hope that this would free humanity from the bonds of superstition and religion. Wanting to inspire other with the joy of knowledge and truth. He hopes it will grow in the world as it has grown in his life and bring peace and calm to all.

**Cast:**

Narrator, Intellectual Beauty, Humanity, Religion

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**Notes on the poem:** Percy took the most liberties with the concept of a "ghost story." He was inspired his embrace of science and knowledge, his rejection of religion and his admiration for Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin.

## Laudanum and Epilogues

1818

### **Laudanum Scene:**

Claire Clairmont chooses an author whose dream we see, she gives that player a cup of Laudanum.

The other players choose a character from that author's work to be present

Claire and author cast the character

The author and Claire choose for each other player if there is: character or author present in the dream.

Claire may play a character in the dream.

GMs - provide direction for each character in dream except the Dreamer. Create a fantastic environment and heighten themes that echo earlier scenes.

Play, the author drinks the Laudanum, then reclines.

Rises, is joined by other authors - they do something fantastic or normal but odd in dreamlike way.

Joined by character(s) from author's work.

Creatures from other works enter.

### **Epilogue**

What impact on popular culture could these other works have had?

Prompts for conversation:

- What current day issue is the work revived to address?
- What actors play the leads?
- What are the controversies? When is it banned?

# Queen



Byron breaks all the rules--he loves where he wills, travels the world, writes brilliantly. Surely he will inspire me.

I'm sure it's not true what they say about him falling in love with his half-sister...

John

# King



This is my chance to cement my relationship with Byron. I've introduced him to Mary and Percy, my beloveds. He'll know soon about our child. I'm sure this summer will change my life for all time.

Claire

# Jack



I thought being here with Byron would bring me new insights but all I'm getting is starved and trapped in a tangle of insane relationships. So-called 'free love,' but I am on the outside.

John - 2

2



My dear sister Mary. I've always been in her shadow. But now I am part of her family--her Percy loves me, too. I hope to find my own place in the spotlight here.

Claire

9



How did such an angel find me? Mary was raised in such an environment of learning--talking with such great minds. How romantic to woo her by the grave of her mother. And she understands the need for freedom--in our love and for the people.

Percy

8



Must Mary monopolize everything good in my life? Byron accepts me into his bed, but he doesn't listen to me as he does her.

Claire-2

6



I love listening to Percy and Byron talk long into the night, but the more I think about his history, can Byron be a good influence on my Percy?

Mary - 2

4



Percy is the light of my life, and the father of my dear child Willmose! I am so grieved still about the loss of our first child who did not survive. It's trying that Percy must deal with his debts, and his wife Harriet whom he left, but I'll never meet a more true equal in mind and spirit. Love transcends all the bonds that society lays upon us.

Mary

10



Percy has a brilliant political and creative mind, whose work is little known but I'm sure will grown in renown. I love him for his idealism and optimistic view that the world can change, but am skeptical that it can come into being in the world without real sacrifice and blood-shed. Exceptional men must fight for change, as did Napoleon.

Byron

Queen



What a promising young man John is, though it does seem that he's more enthralled with Byron than vice versa. Do I seem that way to Byron as well?

Percy

10



My dear half-sister, Mary Jane, now known as Claire. So beloved to myself and to Percy. She's been with us through so much in our travels through war devastated France. I hope her quest to be recognized by Byron--for him to accept the child she bears--will bring her happiness.

Mary

7



I'm not sure John belongs here after all. This young thing hangs on Byron's words but what does he have to say himself? His work seems derivative of Byron's. He has no insights of his own.

Percy - 2

# Ace



Claire just won't let me alone, and now I learn that she's pregnant with my child. How can I turn her away? But I don't respect her.

Byron - 2

# Jack



Claire is such a lovely, intelligent girl. She does seem obsessed with Byron, but perhaps time here will clear her mind. Could she be interested in me?

John

# 3



John is a handsome and charming addition to my household. He takes good care of my ills, keeps me comfortable and healthy. And at least he's here because of my reputation--not just to get into my bed, unlike Claire.

Byron

# Queen



I imagine mother would have loved this place. I feel her spirit beside me, though she died at my birth. My life has changed so, from the quiet retreat of my books that I would read by her graveside. I believe she would approve of my choices, despite the disapproval of society, and even Father. She lived for the principle that a woman must have freedom to choose her own life.

Mary

# Jack



I'm here fleeing mounting debts, and the scandal--not only of my many affairs with men and women--but that my wife Annabella is divorcing me. She thinks me insane and I've famously been called "mad, bad and dangerous to know."

Byron

# 9



Byron and I both face debt at home in England, but the true crime is the austerity being placed on the common people, paying debts owed by their governments after these terrible wars. They are right to join together to seek relief, and better terms from those who control the wealth.

Percy



7  


I've just graduated from a prestigious medical college, one of the youngest to graduate from the program. I chose this assignment to bring me into this circle, and have access to Byron--one of the leading lights of our day.

John

King  


This mansion I've rented near Lake Geneva has been called Villa Belle Reve--"the house of beautiful dreams." I've re-named it Villa Diodati after Charles Diodati, John Milton's dearest friend and creative colleague. Diodati's family owned this place and a plaque says Milton stayed here. We see Milton, born a century and a half before us, as one of our models for poetic achievement and fame for the ages.

Byron

Jack  


England is going through so many changes. The slave trade has been abolished, but not slavery itself. Inclosure acts have pushed small farmers off the land and lost people their livelihoods. They now go to work in factories, but many fear factory machines will steal their jobs--so some workers destroy them.

Mary

10  


All my life I've been surrounded by thinkers, writers, political radicals. This is the society I've been made for. Writing, indulging in love and talk with my equals. This is my opportunity to prove myself.

Claire

10  


Switzerland is a refuge and a model. Here amidst the heights of the Alps, they've created a democratic state that rejects the leadership of the monarchy. My own country, Italy, is divided--controlled by Austria in the north, and the Hapsburg kings in the south. What if Percy's ideas about liberalism could come true there?

John

9  


What a contrast the peace and beauty of this landscape are to the devastation and loss of life Mary, Percy, and I saw in France. I spoke to mothers who lost their children, as I translated for our group. Nearly two million French lost their lives for Napoleon. 800,000 from Russia, half a million from Spain..the loss of all those souls, snuffed out, and for what?

Claire

# Ace



We'll have to speak with the servants, and the other men from the village to be sure that our homes are secure. I've heard of thefts and break-ins for food as the crops come up short in this summer-turned winter.

Byron - 2

# 8



People in the countryside are leaving their homes in search of food. Many have come to our door begging. They are refugees from the climate, just as those we met in France who lost their homes in the war.

Mary - 2

# 6



Disease is rising. I've been called on by local doctors to help treat people with Typhoid fever. It's spreading again, as it did in the war.

John - 2

# 5



Darkness of storms persists through the days. I'm going mad from being confined to the house by this weather. Lake Geneva is rising. At times I feel I can hear it lapping at our door.

Claire-2

# Queen



What a dangerous but glorious climb we had to Lake Geneva in the midst of that wild storm. I'll never forget the massive lightning storm over the lake. The unchecked beauty of nature is like the human spirit.

Percy

# 3



The price of food has spiked. It's making it difficult for me to feed our household. But beyond ourselves, we should urge the government to support farmers in this time of crisis.

Percy - 2

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Claire

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John - 2

Ghost Stories from

# Tales of the Dead

## ***The Spectre Barber***

He was just going off to sleep again, when he fancied he heard a distant door grinding on its hinges, and then shut with a heavy noise. In an instant the idea of a ghost approaching caused him no little fear...

In stalked a tall thin figure with a black beard, whose appearance was indicative of chagrin and melancholy...No powers are adequate to describe the agonies Francis endured: he recommended himself to the Virgin Mary, and endeavoured, as well as his fears would permit, to form an idea of the spectre's designs on him...

Three times three with slow and measured steps he walked round the room, examined the consecrated candles, and snuffed them: he then threw off his cloak, unfolded a shaving apparatus, and took from it the razors, which he sharpened on a large leather strop hanging to his belt.

A cold perspiration came over Francis, when the spectre with a grave air, made signs for him to sit in the barbers chair.

## ***The Family Portraits***

It was an ancient edifice, and had descended through a long line of ancestry to Juliana's father; for which he was only anxious to preserve it in the same state they had left it to him.

Among the number of antiquities most prized by him was the family picture gallery; a vaulted room dark, high, and of gothic architecture, where hung the portraits of his forefathers, as large as the natural size, covering the walls which were blackened by age...Among the portraits there was one of a female, who, it would seem did not belong to the family.

Juliana never looked at this portrait without an involuntary shuddering: and she has told me that from her earliest infancy she has felt this secret terror, without being able to define the cause. Her father treated this sentiment as childish and puerile, and compelled her sometimes to remain alone in that room. But as Juliana grew up, the terror this singular portrait occasioned, increased..."That portrait," she would say, "appears anxious to draw me to it, and as if the lips were about to open and speak to me.—That picture will certainly cause my death."

<https://archive.org/stream/talesofdead00utte#page/192/mode/2up>