



This Dark Endeavor

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Victor and Konrad are the twin brothers Frankenstein and inseparable until Konrad falls gravely ill. In the forbidden Dark Library, Victor finds an ancient formula, and seeks an alchemist to recreate the Elixir of Life. With friends Elizabeth and Henry, he scales highest trees in the Strumwald, dives deepest lake caves, and each sacrifices a body part.

This Dark Endeavor Details

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From Reader Review This Dark Endeavor for online ebook

karen says

huh. i had never heard of this kenneth oppel fellow, but i guess he's some big deal in YA publishing. i have so much to learn.

i liked this book very much. but more important than my enjoyment, this is going to be a great book for reluctant boy readers. that's a big problem in the world of educators and librarians: "why won't the boys reeeead??" and from where i'm standing, i get it. most of the YA stuff is all girls girls girls. and although there are some fantastic books for boys, i have read a bunch of them, there need to be more, all the time, to keep up with all the unicorn hunters and vampire love triangles that may as well be push-up bras and powder puffs and make boys feel outnumbered, when confronted with a YA fiction department in a bookstore or library...

this book is perfect for those poor overwhelmed boys. don't get me wrong, girls are going to love it, too, but it's just full of adventure and alchemy and monsters and it all leads up to frankenstein. eventually, i guess. not so much in this book.

this book is about victor frankenstein, aged 15. and his twin brother konrad and their cousin, elizabeth. when konrad becomes deathly ill, victor and elizabeth secretly become involved with a creepy doctor and the quest to mix up the elixir of life to save him.

there are...difficulties.

his writing is great - it takes the suspenseful bits and drags them out enough to be gripping, but not so much that it frustrates one of those reluctant boy readers. it's good stuff, truly. there are some great action scenes, and some more tender moments, and all the characters come alive in their own way. the beginning part reminded me of the peggy parish books i used to love, in which liza, bill, and jed had their adventures and followed the clues to wonderful conclusions. that is high praise - those books saw me through many years of my youth.

my only grump with this is the discomfort i feel when dealing with the fictitious childhood of a fictitious character, where there are streets named wollstonekraft alley and doctors named polidori. it's cute to have these references, but it complicates things a little, no?? but, then i remember that this book is intended for ages twelve and up, and i should stop thinking too hard and just enjoy this as a well-written adventure story with some great takes on loyalty and love, and the complications therein.

this book of his looks very good - i am definitely going to check it out as well. Half Brother. but you read this one, yeah?

Stephen says

Light, fluffy and **completely forgettable**.

Don't **miscomprestand** me, there's some diversionary entertainment value here and the pace is pretty perky, but I still reached the end with "*what's the point?*" swirling in my head causing a nagging itch that the book never scratched. It left me with a mild case of the **Mehs**. Granted, not a full dose of Meh, but Meh nonetheless.

Call it Meh-lite.

Now I shan't go a-bashing as the book committed no major literary felonies. It's just all the pre-release hyping had teased my expectations with its seductive, titillating premise and then left me cold, unsatisfied and sporting a painful case of blue brains. I ended up having to rub my scalp for an hour to release the tension...it was like High School all over again.

PLOT SUMMARY

Konrad and Victor Frankenstein are a pair of privileged 19th century *Winklevoss twins* living the dream in Chateau Richboy.

Konrad, the older twin (by several minutes), is the darling social butterfly that excels at everything and basks in the warm glow of the people's admiration. Victor is the brilliant, conversationally awkward "also ran" who broods in the shadow of his brother's perfection. When Konrad develops a life-threatening disease, Victor is desperate to save him. His search for a cure leads him to the Bibliotheca Obscura (i.e., Dark Library) of his family where he eventually discovers an encrypted recipe for the mysterious "Elixir of Life" rumored to cure any illness. Thus, begins Victor's journey into the world of the forbidden.

yawn

From there the story becomes a very, very, **VEEEEEEEERY** by the numbers YA quest tale of clue-searching, mini-mysteries, some dangerously ~~boring~~ excursions ending in a fat batch of knowledge and all converging on a final confrontation and a "shock" ending that we could see coming from page one. Nothing bad here, just nothing terribly new. A 30cc injection of Meh.

It's well written and the characters are decent, but I never really connected or engaged with any of them. My favorite would have to be Victor and Konrad's cousin, ~~Hermione~~ Elizabeth, who I thought had real pluck. She also seemed the most genuine and had some interesting shades to her personality. Conversely, I found nothing in the portrayal of Victor that went beyond the second dimension or that added any depth to his older, more famous, more manic persona. Further, I saw nada in the narrative that expanded upon or provided any insight into the established Frankenstein mythos.

A seriously wasted opportunity.

Overall, I was just disappointed that there was not more of substance to this story and I can't see recommending it except as a quick bit of distraction. If your looking for a little Young Frankenstein, might I suggest:

It's smarter, funnier and has an enormous **Schwanzstucker**...but "that goes without saying."

2.0 to 2.5 stars.

Scarlett Readz and Runz....Through Novel Time & Distance says

“You see, when medicine works, it is blessed science, and when it fails, it is witchcraft. - Polidori”
? Kenneth Opiel, This Dark Endeavor

This book I s a v o r e d.

Kenneth Opiel has such a way with words that I was drawn in right from the beginning. This is a fictional prequel to Mary Shelley’s gothic classic Frankenstein. And because this book was published a few years ago and reviewed many times, I won’t go into too many details. But here is the description of the book from Amazon, just as a refresher:

Victor and Konrad are the twin brothers Frankenstein. They are nearly inseparable. Growing up, their lives are filled with imaginary adventures...until the day their adventures turn all too real.

They stumble upon the Dark Library and discover secret books of alchemy and ancient remedies. Father forbids them from ever entering the room again, but when Konrad falls gravely ill, Victor is drawn back to the Dark Library where he uncovers an ancient formula for the Elixir of Life. Victor, along with his beautiful cousin Elizabeth and friend Henry, immediately set out to find a man who was once known for his alchemical works to help them create the formula.

Determined to save Konrad, the three friends scale the highest trees in Strumwald, dive into the deepest lakes, and even make an unthinkable sacrifice in their quest for the elixir’s ingredients. And as if their task was not complicated enough, a new realm of danger—that of illicit love—threatens to end the ordeal in tragedy.

So, the story begins just so very innocently and just so proper. It has this gothic charm and flair to it while the characters are introduced and established. That was just fine for me because all I expected was a little alchemy and mischief.

Surprisingly the story turned into this adventure filled quest with charlatan doctors, dark cellars, potions, fantastical creatures, danger, love, betrayal and.....(more I cannot give away!) And I just ate it up! There was this “surgery” part that made me cringe to the depths of my tummy and I was not sure if I could read through it. Admittedly, I am not one who enjoys horror!

I came across this book by accident, and did not think I would enjoy it this much. This YA novel is a page turner and I would hope that it would pique the interest of young readers to try the actual Frankenstein novel. For that I loved it. If it doesn’t, then I don’t know what can. Looking forward to reading book II, Wicket Intent.

Reynje says

3.5 stars

I read Scarlett as a teen and I decided it had put me off this prequel/sequel written by someone else business for life. (Really, can you blame me? That book is *the worst*.) Then they went and made Anne of Green Gables: The Continuing Story and I could have rage-cried from the whole ‘*have we learned nothing?!*’ of it.

And yet here I am, reviewing a prequel to *Frankenstein*, and as far as I'm concerned, Kenneth Oppel can have it because this was good and it really works as a YA complement to Shelley's gothic classic.

I say this because while reading *Frankenstein* is not strictly a pre-requisite for enjoying *This Dark Endeavour*, it does heighten appreciation for how skilfully Oppel has entwined his novel with the original work. He doesn't simply borrow from the source material; but creates a story that both stands solidly on its own merits, and also weaves the characterisation and thematic elements of the original with his own.

Despite my initial misgivings at the idea of inventing an identical twin (Konrad) that didn't exist in Shelley's work, Oppel won me over with his dedication to writing a Victor that could plausibly evolve into the man Shelley had envisioned. Teenage-Victor is not an archetypal YA hero. He is sympathetic, but he is coloured with the shades of ambition, drive and selfishness that define him as an adult. Teenage-Victor is not above manipulation, and experiences complicated feelings of jealousy and covetousness towards his twin. There's clear internal conflict between Victor's desire for recognition and glory, and his deep fraternal bond with Konrad. It's the collision of these feelings that direct much of the plot of *This Dark Endeavour*.

The Apprenticeship of Victor *Frankenstein* is Oppel's take on Victor's introduction to the dark sciences, and his thirst for knowledge that won't be satiated. Stumbling upon a concealed library of forbidden texts on alchemy – initially a source of amusement – takes on serious significance when Konrad falls ill. Fearing for Konrad's life, Victor and his companions embark on a quest to create the Elixir of Life, aided by shunned former alchemist Julius Polidori. Complicating an already tense situation is the fact that the practice of alchemy has been outlawed in Geneva, a decree Victor's magistrate father had part in enforcing.

The novel had more of an adventure-style storyline than I was expecting, as the teens (Victor and Konrad, their adopted sister Elizabeth Lavenza and close friend Henry Clerval) endeavour to source each ingredient of the Elixir as Konrad's health wanes. Victor leads much of the venture, driven by both his need to see his brother return to health, and his desire to step out of Konrad's shadow and be recognised for greatness on his own.

Elizabeth is possibly the biggest departure in characterisation from Shelley's work, though this is no bad thing. While not a complete reimagining, Oppel gives Elizabeth a strong, feminist sensibility in his novel, and she plays an active role in the quest. There is a love triangle of sorts in the novel (a little literary cousin-love doesn't bother me), but rather than being a tacked-on romantic subplot, Oppel uses it effectively to drive certain aspects of the story, and highlight elements of each character's personalities. While Konrad apparently loves Elizabeth for her generous and warm nature, Victor is drawn her spirited and animalistic side. In a similar manner, we see the conflict of Elizabeth's faith (she is the only member of the family who believes in God) and Victor's belief in science, when Konrad's life hangs in the balance. As such, there is some interesting discussion in the novel about science, spirituality, medicine and "magic" and how the lines between them (at least in context of this story) are blurred.

The novel isn't without anachronisms, particularly in its rendering of the characters and the way they act, but I can more readily forgive this is a novel with clearly fantastical elements, as opposed to a work of strict historical fiction. The teens' escapades require significant suspension of belief, but not in a way that detracts from enjoying the story. It's such a fun story to get caught up in that I don't find the fluidity between the possible and impossible a negative aspect.

Though I did just call this a "fun" story, it's also quite dark. Not in a "*won't somebody think of the children*" way, but in the sense that the story doesn't shy away from the darker side of human nature. As I mentioned earlier, I found Victor sympathetic, but he is also somewhat morally ambiguous at times, and his choices

present an interesting and complicated conflict for the reader.

This *Dark Endeavour* is a fitting lead in to the nightmare of ethics to come in *Frankenstein*, and a skilful foreshadowing of Victor's impending obsession.

* * * * *

Okay, can someone please fix the synopsis for this edition because it's *fff@&*^g PIQUE* not **peak**.

Rick Riordan says

I don't often request an advance reading copy of a book. In fact, I'm usually declining ARCs because I'm offered more than I could possibly read. However, when I heard about Opper's latest project, a prequel to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, I immediately asked if I could read an advance copy, and I was lucky enough to get it.

I'm a big fan of Opper's previous series that began with *Airborn*. I'm also a fan of the Romantics, like the Shelleys. It's no coincidence that Percy Jackson is named Percy. Short for Perseus, yes, but Percy Shelley, who was enamored with Greek myths and wrote extensively about them, also liked to fancy that his name was derived from the old Greek hero. In one letter, his wife calls him "my own Perseus." But I digress . . .

For many years, I've thought the *Frankenstein* story was ripe for retelling as a YA novel. It's one of those ideas that I toyed with but never had time to pursue. I'm very glad Opper beat me to it, because he does it beautifully.

This *Dark Endeavour* introduces 15-year-old Victor *Frankenstein*. Opper has taken the liberty of giving Victor a twin brother Konrad, and while you may be thinking, 'oh, lord, not the old twin brother plot device,' it works well in this book and comes across as fresh and perfectly plausible. In fact, it's vital to the story. When Konrad falls ill, Victor is driven to find a cure, even if that means turning to the forbidden secrets of alchemy. And so, from the best of motives, a dark obsession is born – to unlock the secrets of life and death.

There is much more to the story, though. Victor's search for ingredients sends him and his friends on many harrowing adventures. I won't give any spoilers, especially since the book isn't out yet, but I can tell you this is a true page-turner.

Most importantly, there is Elizabeth, the distant cousin of the *Frankenstein* family – a spirited, fiercely independent young woman, devoutly Catholic, beautiful, headstrong, and drawn to both Konrad and Victor for very different reasons. It's the love triangle between these three multidimensional characters that really drives the narrative. There are no easy answers, no true villains and heroes. I found myself cheering for Victor, and yet hating him at times. Konrad comes across as noble, and yet insufferably perfect. Elizabeth is mercurial, yet perfectly true to her convictions. Opper really brings them to life, which in a *Frankenstein* novel has many levels of meaning, I suppose.

The book explores faith and science, loyalty and hypocrisy, love and jealousy – all the things that young readers, and even older readers, struggle with. In his earlier work *Airborn*, Opper updated the classic Jules Verne/Robert Louis Stevenson adventures and pioneered what would later be called 'steampunk.' In *This Dark Endeavor*, Opper has reinvented the gothic thriller for modern readers. The narrative crackles with

tension, emotions run high, and the atmosphere is perfectly dark and brooding. The Shelleys would be proud. I definitely recommend you check out the book when it's published August 23. I anticipate *This Dark Endeavor* will get a lot of attention, and rightly so.

Allie says

I was interested in reading this book partially because of the hype. This first I'd ever heard of this title came in the form of an announcement that Summit Films had acquired the screen rights. You can read that [here](#).

I also liked the cover (sorry, it's a weakness). But you have to admit, it's just kind of a cover just made to appeal to a bookstalker like me, with a keyhole to peep through and everything. And the plot also appealed to my bookstalking nature...a forbidden library! Yeah! This one had my name written all over it.

I've never been that into the Frankenstein story—it's not one of my personal favorites. However, I finished *This Dark Endeavor* wanting to revisit Mary Shelley's classic. I have a feeling many teens will finish this book and go on to read Frankenstein for the first time. Any book that encourages kids to read a classic is a good thing, but *This Dark Endeavor* is also good in its own right.

One of the things I really loved about *This Dark Endeavor* was the pacing. There is no lag in the middle. Action scene follows action scene, and the suspense in some of them is painful. Opper hooks you from the opening scene and does not let go until the conclusion. Dark, claustrophobic caves! Giant, should-be-extinct aquatic creatures! Nightmarish scavengers! Preternaturally clever mammals! Secrets, plots, betrayals! Whew...

Victor and Konrad are both sympathetic characters. Victor's motivations, given his personality and complex feelings for his brother, are believable. Konrad is almost angelic in his goodness, generosity, and fair-mindedness, but Victor has plenty of flaws to balance Konrad out. Elizabeth, the distant cousin the boys' age who was adopted into the family, is as fiery and strong-willed as you could want a heroine to be—and it's believable that both Konrad and Victor would fall for her. Their parents are the kind of progressive thinkers that cook dinner for their servants once a week and stress the importance of an equal education for Elizabeth, despite the fact she is female. The reader gets enough of a glimpse into this loving, seemingly perfect family that we can appreciate how devastating it is for all of them when their beloved Konrad falls ill.

I can't say much more about the plot without spoiling it. I will say I really did not like one scene due to what happened in it—but the scene was not gratuitous and part of the reason I was upset is because Opper wrote it so skillfully. So I can't fault him for it even if it did make me mad. It served the story.

Conclusion? I highly recommend this book for anyone who loves gothic stories, enjoys books like *The Monstrumologist* and its sequel, and for fans of Shelley's Frankenstein. Die-hard fans may not approve of what Opper has done with the story—as with any fans approaching a new take on something they feel strongly about—but I think they will find it compelling nonetheless.

Brent Hartinger says

I'm rarely disappointed in a book by Ken Opiel, but his latest, *This Dark Endeavor: The Apprenticeship of Victor Frankenstein*, may be my favorite yet.

Yes, it's the story of a teenage Victor Frankenstein, and normally I'm not a fan of these "before they were famous" retellings of classic figures from myth or literature (for that matter, I'm not a big fan of reboots and reimaginings in general). But I'm making an exception in this case, if only because the book is so masterfully plotted and written.

Victor Frankenstein has always lived in the shadow of his twin, Konrad Frankenstein. To make matters even more infuriating, Konrad is a genuinely great guy. It just makes sense that their mutual friend Elizabeth would be more attracted to Konrad. One point, not quite intending to be cruel, she says outright that although Victor and Konrad are identical, they're nothing alike.

So it also stands to reason that when Konrad falls victim to a mysterious illness, Victor would be particularly driven to explore the secret library in the bowels of his father's castle searching for a cure. Finally, he has an opportunity to both win Konrad's respect and Elizabeth's love.

This being the foreshadow-y retelling one of the most tragic figures in all of literature, things don't go quite as planned, of course.

And this is perhaps what I liked most about the book: it gives us a plausible, yet mostly unexpected explanation as to how Victor ended up where we all know he does. He wasn't born to play God — he had to be driven there. The book does a smashing job of showing us, in big and small ways, how Victor, a very flawed character to begin with, does things that, well, make a lot of sense at the time.

Like the best flawed characters, he's sympathetic. There but for the grace of God (and hopefully a little less ego) go I.

There are two big twists in the book, the first of which caught me completely by surprise — even though it had been telegraphed strongly and cleanly. I love it when that happens.

Opiel is perhaps most well-known for the steampunk *Airborn* books (the first of which won the Printz Award). *This Dark Endeavor* isn't quite steampunk, although it takes place in a sort of an alternative 19th century Switzerland, at the cusp of the age of science (directly after an age of alchemy). This was a wise (but subtle) artistic choice: writing in 1818, Mary Shelley, of course, set the original *Frankenstein* in the "real" world, but science soon eclipsed the novel. The only way the story can be taken seriously now is in exactly the alternative dimension described here, which is perfectly executed.

One quibble: as much as I think the title is evocative and wonderfully representative of the genre, I can never remember the damn thing!

The story continues in *Such Wicked Intent*, coming in August, and a major movie version (from the producers of the *Twilight* films, alas) is reportedly in the works.

written to establish the situation, and I'm afraid it's rather dull: two brothers who love each other deeply but have a sort of rivalry, although Konrad seems rather oblivious to the feelings of jealousy of his twin, Victor. They also have a tag-along friend who fancies himself a playwright, and a fiery female cousin who has lived with them since childhood and who wants to marry Konrad. Of course, Victor loves her too, and this feeds the predictable brotherly rivalry. Konrad then falls ill and none of the medical science of the time seems able to help him. When Victor and his friends make contact with an impoverished, crippled alchemist, things finally get a little more interesting. However, the whole book basically rides on peaks and troughs like this; nearly the entire second third consists of the trio wandering around looking for ingredients for this Elixir of Life, and it just isn't all that exciting.

The main problem, I think, is that there really isn't much conflict in the book at all. Sure, Victor has flashes of rage directed against his brother, and he wants Elizabeth for himself, but there's never any real doubt in his mind that he wants Konrad cured and his fraternal love doesn't really turn to the kind of hate foreshadowed by the play depicted at the novel's outset. Toward the final pages, it's as if Oppel suddenly woke up and realised there just wasn't enough tension in his narrative, so (view spoiler)

Congruent with the central issue of a lack of substantial conflict is the feeling that it was all for nothing. I recognise that this is sort of the point, and yes, this book has a surprisingly downbeat ending for a so-called young adult novel, but it feels rather like an empty prequel film made after the big blockbuster to cash in, if you know what I mean. The sequel being, of course, *The Modern Prometheus*, justifiably considered a classic by a great many. I think Oppel bit off altogether too much here; the book had to proceed this way, and yet feels so empty as a result. Again, I get the sense that if he had not been bound to the extant Frankenstein mythos, things might have turned out better.

A more minor gripe I have with this book is that the writing occasionally seems sloppy. Usually Oppel seems to be putting in an effort at verisimilitude, and while I'm not entirely convinced that I'm reading a true narrative from the early 1800s, neither am I put off. However, every so often he seems to slip, and a turn of phrase pops out that I would consider to be too modern to have come from any of these characters' mouths or pens. There are also a few grammatical errors that someone really should have caught. Finally, it occurs to me that these people are just a bit too progressive, and "enlightened" in the current sense, to be entirely realistic.

I do see that Oppel tried to create a flawed protagonist in Victor, and he somewhat succeeded. Victor does not believe in God and scoffs at Elizabeth's churchgoing and stolid faith. I'd be on Victor's side in this matter, myself, though perhaps a little nicer about it if I was trying to woo my cousin; but Victor places an intense, unreasonable faith in this Elixir of Life. He believes that it works without even having seen the slightest bit of evidence. Not only this, but he basically finds Paracellus's elixir completely at random; it's stated several times in the text that there are many such formulae, and no doubt had he first happened upon some other recipe by John Dee or someone or other, his faith would have been equally blind. Thus, Victor is just as much a hypocrite as his father, and of course has too much hubris to realise this himself. I suppose this was the most interesting facet of the book, all told.

While this book generally failed to get much of a reaction from me one way or another, there was one scene that had me squirming and made me say, "ah, well done, you've hit upon one of my greatest fearful obsessions". That was (view spoiler)

I wish I could recommend this, but it pains me to say that it all feels a bit like a hollow shell.

Michael says

Most people know my obsession with Frankenstein so I wanted to give *This Dark Endeavour* a go; since the author Kenneth Oppel calls this a prequel. Victor's brother Konrad, has fallen ill and no doctor has been able to cure him. Victor's determination to save his brother has turned to alchemy to find the forbidden Elixir of Life and save his twin brother. With the help of his beautiful cousin Elizabeth and best friend Henry; Victor pushes the boundaries of nature and science in a treacherous search for the ingredients to help Konrad.

This is book one in *The Apprenticeship of Victor Frankenstein* series which I believe is being made into a trilogy. My first thoughts were; a YA novel about Victor Frankenstein was that this is never going to work, but then after a bit of a look at the book I decided to give it a go anyway. I thought maybe if he's research of Frankenstein is in-depth enough and he keeps to the dark and gothic elements of the original classic it might work. I really should have stuck to my first thoughts because from the very start I hated this book.

First of all this book follows the same old paranormal young adult formula; which means not so much dark and gothic elements but lots and lots to do with a love triangle. I really hate love triangles in books at the moment that felt like the entire plot of this book. Sure they search for the Elixir of Life but there was more to do with Victor's feelings toward Elizabeth than the actual alchemy.

Personally I wish I never read this book, it really did nothing for the Frankenstein story and love triangles are always annoying. There is a small steampunk element in this book but that felt like the author was jumping on the bandwagon to help market this book to the readers that want Steampunk, Paranormal, Love Triangle filled Young Adult romance. If want gothic and dark YA like I do, then this book is not for you. But if you like the idea of a romance with paranormal elements in it, then maybe give this book a go.

Tracy (Cornerfolds) says

Read more of my reviews at Cornerfolds.com!

Confession: I have never read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I've also never been a huge fan of *Frankenstein* apart from maybe *Young Frankenstein*, which I watched way too many times growing up, thanks to my parents. Recently I watched *Victor Frankenstein* (there's probably a review of that coming soon) and really, really wanted to read more about Frankenstein's story. When I saw the gorgeous cover of *This Dark Endeavor* and saw that it was a prequel story, I knew I had to read it!

This is the story of Victor and Konrad Frankenstein, along with their cousin, Elizabeth, and good friend, Henry. Although each of these characters is important in their own way, Victor is undoubtedly the star of the show and he is incredible in the strangest way. I knew going in that Victor would be a... unique character. I wasn't disappointed.

Victor is passionate and odd and has just a little bit of darkness in him. He wants what he wants and does not let anything stand in his way. At times I wondered whether he was entirely stable or whether he lacked the ability to truly care about anyone other than himself and sometimes he even made me a little uncomfortable. But despite all of his shortcomings, he was a wonderful character to get to know. His love for his brother

could not be doubted, even if he had a strange way of showing it at times.

Elizabeth is the love interest here, if there must be one. Yes, there is something of a love triangle, but I really didn't find that it detracted that much from the story. In fact, I thought it really added to my understanding of Victor as a character. Elizabeth was also a really interesting character to get to know. It seemed as if a bit of Victor's curiosity and passion had also rubbed off on her and she did not always know what to make of her own actions. I honestly cannot wait to get to know more about her in the second book in this duology.

I found the plot to be extremely intriguing. Perhaps some of Victor Frankenstein's backstory is given in the original book, but having never read that, I only have secondhand sources to go by. I knew that something had happened to Victor's brother, but to see Konrad's illness and Victor's determination to save him shed a lot of light on his later life. Admittedly, I don't know much about alchemy, but following along with Victor and Co. as they worked towards creating the Elixir of Life was both informative and exciting!

The setting that was painted by Kenneth Oppel was also really well done! I don't read much gothic fiction, but I definitely felt like he did a wonderful job of placing me into the Frankenstein house in Geneva. As a book worm, my favorite part was obviously the Dark Library!

The one bit I didn't really enjoy (which, unfortunately, was kind of a big part of the story) was the old alchemist who helped Victor create the elixir. I felt that he (along with his cat) was predictable and just a little too eccentric for the story. I feel like if his character could have been toned down just a bit, this would have been a much better read.

Overall I really enjoyed This Dark Endeavor! Although it wasn't a perfect read, I thought it was a fantastic prequel story to the Frankenstein I've grown up with through the movies. I can't wait to read the next one and, perhaps, even read the classic all of this was based on!

Actual rating: 4.5 stars

Latasha says

This YA book starts off slow but picks up a little before the middle. This story is about the Frankenstein's during Victor's teenage years, when he first learns of alchemy. It was ok.

nat. says

2.5

this is was ok. I thought it was gonna be a much darker story with Victor spiraling out control. I wanted to see more alchemy, and Victor going batshit crazy but alas that didn't happen. I also didn't like the "love triangle" if you can call it that. I though it was unnecessary and so out of the blue that Victor suddenly found himself in love with Elizabeth ok whatever, dude. I did enjoy the writing.

Ashley Daviau says

I was a little unsure about this one going into it but I ended up thoroughly enjoying it. I find it bears little resemblance to the story it's based on but I find the story is more interesting this way. Retellings often resemble the original too much to be enjoyable and that was far from the case with this story.

I would have liked to see a little more about alchemy, those were by far the most interesting parts of the story and what really drew me into it. I find the idea fascinating and it's definitely a big part of why I enjoyed this book so much.

The only reason it got four stars and not five is that the sudden appearance of a love triangle quite bothered me. It kind of came out of nowhere and in all honesty, brought nothing to the story. It was completely unnecessary and quite random.

Dan says

Well, this book was certainly interesting....and disturbingly entertaining.

This *Dark Endeavor* is a sort-off "retelling/prequel" to the famous *Frankenstein*. We follow Victor Frankenstein, who's trying to find the elixir of life, a cure for his brother's illness.

I really liked the book. It was gripping, had an adventure feel to it, dark and some cringe-worthy scenes. I really liked the story, but the thing that stuck out most to me was the eerie feeling I got from both the setting of the book, but the characters as well. Victor Frankenstein is an interesting character, and he developed a lot through this short book. I loved his motives, and I was really intrigued by some of the dark sides that we got to see from him. His love for his brother and devotion to do anything to save him was really brave. To see his struggles throughout the book was also very interesting.

I'm really curious to read the second book, because there were some answers unattended for. I also really want to read *Frankenstein* as well. If you're in the mood for something dark, gothic and entertaining then you should really pick up this book. It was really good!

Amelia, the pragmatic idealist says

This Dark Endeavor is an incredible book! I don't know where Kenneth Oppel got the idea to write a prequel to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* starring a teenage version of the eponymous character, but what an ingenious idea!

Truth be told, I never read *Frankenstein* in high school or college (different track, I guess). Basically, my knowledge of the source material has come from Kenneth Branagh's film version, and Mel Brooks.

Still, even I could recognize the level of detail, skill and panache that Kenneth Oppel put into this fascinating novel. And for those of you who did read *Frankenstein*, have you ever wondered what might have happened to make Victor Frankenstein the man who actually dared to create life? Here, it's simple: Victor has a brilliant, charismatic and practically perfect twin brother, Konrad. Light to his shadow, and all that. When

Konrad falls ill with a rare condition, Victor takes it upon himself to find a cure, believing that practical science has failed. His course of study is the dark arts of alchemy - the first of many such introductions into dark and creepy arts. Joining him in his "studies" are his cousin, Elizabeth Lavenza (yes, *the* Elizabeth Lavenza...(view spoiler)) and best friend Henry Clerval (yes, *the* Henry Clerval...not like we don't know what eventually...oh, you know).

I loved the way Opper chose to portray Victor. It must have been hard to try and make one of literature's most megalomaniac characters into a sympathetic boy, eager-to-please and desperate for attention. *I* actually liked the guy! It was easy to root for him in his endeavors (dark and twisty as they may be) and I found myself even making excuses for him on several occasions. Even though you know, ultimately, that Victor Frankenstein is a completely doomed character, you still want him to succeed. That's powerful writing, and hats off to Kenneth Opper for making me care about a character I never thought I could admire. And I loved seeing Victor gradually become more and more twisted, more aggressive, more desperate, and *still* remain sympathetic. I guess I'm drawn to characters with delusions of grandeur who want to prove their worth. Those must be the characters that leave an impression on me. :)

This Dark Endeavor was simply unputdownable, and I rarely say that. My little ADD-self can put down the most thoroughly interesting of books, too, so that should say something to this novel's overwhelming power of intrigue. If you haven't yet, I highly recommend picking up this novel. It clocks in at slightly under 300 pages, so it would be a quick read. And like I said, it's practically unputdownable (view spoiler)

Celise says

Yay for talented Canadian authors.
I will certainly be watching this film.

I have an intense fear of giant birds, water and fish of any size, specifically sharks and prehistoric looking things like this one, and loss of limbs or permanent body mutilation. Thank you Kenneth, for bringing all of my fears together in one place that was so fascinating I will never be able to forget them, unfortunately.

I have read the Airborn series and Darkwing, and Opper never lets his readers down. All of his adventures are unique and dark. This is probably one of the best stories I've ever had the pleasure of reading.

I was thoroughly disturbed and involved in all three of the ventures made by the children. (view spoiler)
Why?????????????????????????????

Thinking of rereading this one soon.

Brandi says

Although I believe *Endeavor* has promise (and **deserves five stars**), I will only give it three.

I began the first chapter with some knowledge of Victor Frankenstein already. I'd read about twenty pages of Mary Shelley's version and knew enough about his childhood to recognize a few names.

Of course, Opper's work is not a true retelling. For instance, the "real" Frankenstein was the oldest of his siblings, and he did not have a twin. However, he did have some characteristics of the Victor we know, including:

- a) feelings for a girl named Elizabeth who lived in his house,
- b) a certain friend by the name of Henry Clerval (who, by the way, "loved enterprise, hardship, and even **danger**, for its own sake"), and
- c) a father who was dead set against alchemy.

As much as this tale differs from its counterpart, **it has a Gothic chill of its own**. I don't know many authors brave enough to walk their main characters through the loss of limbs, an identical twin, and romance in the same one hundred pages.

However, I do admire the author's use of mysterious, brooding language. Not only does it suit Victor Frankenstein's personality, but it mirrors the mood found in Mary Shelley's version. Examples include northern winds that brought with them "**a glacial chill**" (56), a venture into a Dark Library during "**the witching hour**" (139), and a map on which "**[t]he lines of ink trailed into nothingness like the wanderings of an unhealthy mind**" (151).

But the true purpose of this novel lies not in its retelling of a classic Gothic novel, but in **its unearthing of human desires and struggles**. I read a few other reviews that criticized Victor for his selfishness and childishness. I'll definitely agree that his actions were both selfish and childish, but I don't think it was wrong of Opper to make him this way. (For one thing, he had to be arrogant enough to grow into an inventor of a monstrous machine.)

Of course, Victor's main problem is his jealousy of his twin brother, Konrad. Konrad is athletic, smart, and social (and he has earned the love of a certain someone), and Victor wishes he could be more like him. And if there's one thing I've learned in life, it's not to envy your siblings - especially your own identical twin.

If anything, I wish the author had included more scenes where Victor and Konrad got along. I especially looked forward to the scene when the two brothers would **explore the world together** (perhaps across the seas and into the unknown, as they wished), with just the two of them. (It's not enough to be staring daggers at each other behind Elizabeth's back while they're climbing through caves.) But I appreciated their last conversation together, anyway, and I'm glad they departed on brotherly terms.

There was also a tiny detail that annoyed me throughout the book: Elizabeth's outfit choices when she's adventuring. I know she's supposed to be tomboyish, but even so, **girls in that time period did not wear breeches**. (Please correct me, though, if I'm wrong.) It seems unlikely that even a passionate girl like Elizabeth would have done such a thing at that time.

Overall, this book was hard to enjoy, what with the numerous attacks by wild creatures and all of the blood that was shed. But I am impressed with Opper's originality. (What's more impressive than a quest for the Elixir of Life, one of the most desired substances in history? To be honest, the lure of it kept me reading when I wasn't sure I could keep going.) I don't think I'll read the next in the series, but it was a thrilling adventure nonetheless.

I've heard that there might be a movie version coming out in the next few years. That would be interesting...

Krista says

I really loved this book. I'm a huge Frankenstein fan. After reading the synopsis of this book, I decided to give it a try. I was not disappointed. The story takes place in young Victor Frankenstein's teenage years. Describing his personality and how he was to become later in life, fascinated with science, transmutation, alchemy, and his personal struggle with if there is a God.

I really loved how this story kept me wanting more. There was danger, adventure, and deception. Also love real genuine love from Victor's twin brother, his family, as well as, his servants. I really don't remember a slow moment. I liked how although there was a romance in the book, they kept the romance as secondary. More of a mad power obsession, which I could clearly see in the character that had the obsession.

Overall, I will be continuing to the next book. This read has also prompted me to re-read my beloved Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. I loved this book!
