



Nicholas Day

— IN CONVERSATION WITH —

NICHOLAS DAY,

AUTHOR OF *A WORLD WITHOUT SUMMER*

***A World Without Summer* recounts the eruption of Mount Tambora. When did you first learn about this historic event?**

Once I saw how radically the eruption of Tambora changed the world, and how fast, and how dramatically—it felt like a disaster film, honestly. It was hard to look away. But it was also a mystery—a global murder mystery. Because no one knew what was wrong. No one knew what was happening. (And no one would figure it out for over a hundred years.)

The same year as the eruption, Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*. What ties these two events together?

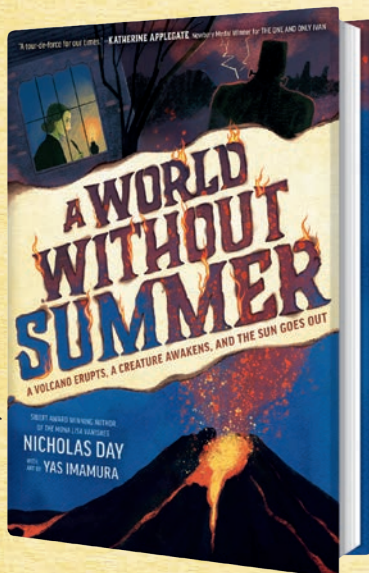
The young Mary Shelley—just a teenager—is in Switzerland, and the weather there is miserable. That’s because of the climate shock that Tambora causes. It’s the worst summer in the history of Switzerland, and Mary Shelley’s stuck inside and she’s dreadfully bored. And out of her boredom comes a horrifying idea and the idea becomes *Frankenstein*, which is our greatest novel about someone who thinks he’s doing good—and only realizes what he’s wrought once it is too late. It has a lot to say to us right now.

Was there anything you learned during your research process that didn’t make it into the book?

So much! Here’s a favorite: The story of the Baroness von Krüdener, who was born into wealth and nobility but became a sort of end-of-days prophet. The worse conditions were, the more people wanted to believe in someone, and they flocked to her. Her feats were fantastical. It was said that she’d fed 900 starving people with only nineteen loaves of bread. She was—for a brief, bizarre moment in time—a hero, a mystic, the only person who could make sense of a world that had stopped making sense.

Do you consider *A World Without Summer* to be a call to action for the current climate crisis even though the events of the book take place in the past?

It can be strangely easy to block out the current climate crisis. It makes us anxious, or we dismiss it, or we say we’ve heard it all before. The power of a story about a climate shock happening in the past is that we don’t have those instinctive responses. We get lost in the story, and when we come out, our world looks a bit different. It gives us a different perspective on our own story. But what happens at that point—well, that’s a question for the reader.



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