

FRANKENSTEIN
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CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR WALDMAN, 50, female

PROFESSOR KREMPE, 40, male

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN, late teens/early 20s, male

URSULA CLERVAL, student, 18, female

ELIZABETH LEVANZA, Victor's cousin, 20, female

THE MONSTER, male

WILLIAM, Victor's younger brother, early teens, male

MOTHER OF FRANKENSTEIN, 50, female

BAILIFF, 30, gender neutral

KARIN MULLER, 50, female

JUSTINE MORITZ, 20, female

FATHER OF ELIZABETH, 60, male

2 or more ASSISTANTS in Frankenstein's Laboratory, 20s, gender neutral

BODY ON GURNEY, 20s, female

Doubling:

PROFESSOR WALDMAN and KARIN MULLER or MOTHER OF FRANKENSTEIN.

PROFESSOR KREMPE and BAILIFF or FATHER OF ELIZABETH.

CLERVAL and JUSTINE MORITZ or FEMALE BODY ON GURNEY.

PLACE

Various locations: Interiors and outdoors in Germany and Switzerland.

TIME

1818

SET

A bare stage/unit set with several entrances; chairs and a gurney with scientific equipment can be brought on and off.

FRANKENSTEIN

Victor Frankenstein, a young man in his late teens-early 20s, enters and sits in a chair facing Professor Waldman, a woman. Behind her stands Professor Krempe, a man.

WALDMAN. Welcome to the University of Ingolstadt. You are...?

FRANKENSTEIN. Victor Frankenstein.

WALDMAN. (*Finding his application.*) Ah yes. I am Professor Waldman, head of surgery, and you see standing behind me Professor Krempe, world expert in human anatomy.

FRANKENSTEIN. I am honored.

WALDMAN. Define precisely your interests and field of study.

FRANKENSTEIN. Anatomy, of course. Surgery as derived from its knowledge. In the end I might explain my interest as reanimation.

KREMPE. Explain.

FRANKENSTEIN. I pursue that spark of life that might reanimate dormant tissue.

WALDMAN. Dormant?

FRANKENSTEIN. I reject death as a finality.

WALDMAN. (*Amused.*) Oh, do you?

KREMPE. You have at least the quality of making the absurd amusing.

FRANKENSTEIN. I believe death remains a scientific frontier, insufficiently studied. Why should it not be a protracted condition rather than a sudden and unexplained event?

KREMPE. Thank you, that will be all.

WALDMAN. Wait. Do you mean immediate resuscitation? The restart of the heart, for instance? A minute, two minutes?

FRANKENSTEIN. Why not at any time before decay makes it impossible?

KREMPE. There is no science to support this possibility.

FRANKENSTEIN. Exactly.

Pause.

WALDMAN. Welcome to the University of Ingolstadt, Victor Frankenstein.

KREMPE. The boy is a preacher not a scientist.

WALDMAN. Here we must part ways, Professor Krempe. He dares to dare.

KREMPE. There is no scientific support, none, for such nonsense.

WALDMAN. (*Rising.*) To dare greatly and fail is more admirable than to succeed only in part. Failure is also science, Krempe. (*To Frankenstein.*) We will see you, Frankenstein, in the surgery, Monday morning next. Be prompt.

Waldman picks up the chair and exits right. Krempe picks up the other chair and exits left. Frankenstein rolls up his sleeves. Clerval, a female student, enters.

CLERVAL. Good morning, Frankenstein.

FRANKENSTEIN. Good morning, Clerval.

CLERVAL. After eight months you might deign to call me Ursula, Victor.

FRANKENSTEIN. There are no first names in science, Clerval.

CLERVAL. And no last names in love.

FRANKENSTEIN. (*Amused.*) You are in love?

CLERVAL. Deeply, profoundly, unforgettably.

FRANKENSTEIN. With whom?

CLERVAL. That you will never know.

FRANKENSTEIN. Do I know this person?

CLERVAL. You have not the ability to know a person. Black robes and red blood, that is all we are to you.

FRANKENSTEIN. Pig's blood and I am sick of it. I am not here to study pigs.

CLERVAL. It is a stepping stone.

FRANKENSTEIN. I have no interest in dead animals or dead humans for that matter. Lest they should rise and walk. Fair's fair though, I have one in my apartments.

CLERVAL. What's in your apartments?

FRANKENSTEIN. A corpse. Am I to understand you do not have one?

CLERVAL. (*Amused.*) That's the first amusing thing I've heard you say.

FRANKENSTEIN. Humor bores me, but sometimes one stumbles across it. Tomorrow there will be no corpse.

CLERVAL. I'm afraid to ask what will become of it.

FRANKENSTEIN. I will reanimate it.

CLERVAL. Reanimate? You mean, bring the dead back to life?

FRANKENSTEIN. Precisely.

CLERVAL. That is the province of frauds and tricksters, not those of us who serve science.

FRANKENSTEIN. By daylight it will be science.

Pause.

CLERVAL. And where did you get this corpse, Victor? They are not for sale on every street corner.

FRANKENSTEIN. I have friends among the grave diggers. He's my third actually.

CLERVAL. Dare I ask what became of the others?

FRANKENSTEIN. I left them on the steps of churches on nights that clouded the moon.

CLERVAL. And in the morning?

FRANKENSTEIN. Gone without a trace.

CLERVAL. The churches removed them?

FRANKENSTEIN. Reburied them, I assume.

CLERVAL. It is against the law to desecrate the deceased.

FRANKENSTEIN. Science is my law.

CLERVAL. You are talented, Frankenstein, beware that you do not waste that talent.

FRANKENSTEIN. I will beware. Thank you.

Pause.

CLERVAL. I don't know what to make of you.

FRANKENSTEIN. Nor I you. You take a place here that a man should have.

CLERVAL. That, sir, is patent nonsense.

FRANKENSTEIN. So it seems you have proven.

CLERVAL. And I excelled you at the examination.

FRANKENSTEIN. I had a headache.

CLERVAL. I thought that was a woman's excuse.

FRANKENSTEIN. (*Smiling.*) Touché.

CLERVAL. What will you do with your corpse?

FRANKENSTEIN. Such knowledge would be dangerous to your career. I say only, I will be known.

CLERVAL. No luck so far, I gather.

FRANKENSTEIN. I have a good feeling about this one. I pieced him together from three.

CLERVAL. (*Shaking her head.*) You are disturbingly enterprising.

FRANKENSTEIN. I wanted something impressive for the world to applaud, so I made him from the best bits.

CLERVAL. People are horrified by your conversation, Victor. How horrified will they then be by your science?

FRANKENSTEIN. Unimportant. Only discovery has value in the end.

CLERVAL. I am the only student here who dares your company because I find you strangely entertaining.

FRANKENSTEIN. To find me entertaining is an untreatable illness.

CLERVAL. Hopefully not fatal. At this rate, you will live without love.

FRANKENSTEIN. I quite dislike it when you speak of love,

Clerval. First, because it is an idea made up by your sex and, secondly, if it did exist it would distract one from science.

Clerval exits. Frankenstein stays onstage and pulls a letter from his coat as Elizabeth steps into a spotlight on another part of the stage. She speaks the letter to Frankenstein, who reads it as she speaks.

ELIZABETH. Dear Cousin, I write out of concern that your family has not received word from you of late. Knowing as I do your passion for your studies, I have begun to worry that you may not see to other matters, such as your health. The spring is beautiful here and the meadows are in full bloom. I wish you were here to share them with me. Until I hear from you, please do take care. Elizabeth Levanza.

Elizabeth exits and Clerval comes back onstage as lights cross-fade to Frankenstein's laboratory. A gurney carrying what we will call "the Monster" is rolled on by several lab assistants, along with a structure on which hang wires and equipment. A storm is heard in the distance.

FRANKENSTEIN. Now, here are my rooms, either step in or go away. I have work to do.

CLERVAL. While other men pursue me, you rudely reject me. How could I not be fascinated? I want to see what a madman makes of science.

FRANKENSTEIN. Step in then.

CLERVAL. "Lay on, Macduff, and damned be he who first cries 'hold enough!'"

FRANKENSTEIN. Quoting Shakespeare is the recourse of the vaguely intelligent.

CLERVAL. (*Acidly.*) Congratulations on knowing it was Shakespeare.

They move into the room and stand upstage of the gurney, looking down at the body which is covered by a sheet. Frankenstein pulls back the sheet, partially revealing a body attached by tubes and wires to devices on the gurney. After a moment.

So.

FRANKENSTEIN. So.

CLERVAL. What is it that you endeavor here?

FRANKENSTEIN. It is my belief that there is an extended period after what is immediately and incorrectly called “death” when function can be reclaimed. I have produced interesting results by sending a charge of electricity through the inanimate tissue.

CLERVAL. As Galvani used an electrical charge to animate frogs’ legs, yes. Muscle movement in dissected lower species has been demonstrated, but it is now a parlor game in the guise of science.

FRANKENSTEIN. I have restored breath as well...for a few moments. I believe it is only a matter of the strength of the electrical charge, and for that problem I have devised a remedy.

CLERVAL. You are too much alone.

FRANKENSTEIN. I am too much doubted.

CLERVAL. The university cannot sanction this trafficking in bodies.

FRANKENSTEIN. The university is not the only provider of knowledge.

CLERVAL. The bodies from which you made this horror are criminally obtained and to carve them and rearrange them, a second crime.

FRANKENSTEIN. I thought you were my friend.

CLERVAL. Reluctantly.

FRANKENSTEIN. Send me to prison then. Be, if you insist, the murderess of progress.

CLEARVAL. (*Staring at him.*) Sheer balderdash.

FRANKENSTEIN. Enough. I do not share with those who have no ears to hear.

CLERVAL. Do what you will, Frankenstein. I was never here and never heard. But hereafter you may not trust my silence. Good night.

FRANKENSTEIN. Good night.

Clerval exits. Sounds of rain and thunder increase. Frankenstein fastens a cable and wires from the structure to devices on the gurney.

I am but a hair’s breath away. In this moment...this moment success

is possible. If I can bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might renew life not just for the moment but forever. Death will no longer be our master.

Loud thunder, lightning flashes. The body twitches, then jerks. Frankenstein releases belts that secure the Monster to the gurney. He hits a switch on one of the devices. More flashes of lightning, more twitches and jerks followed by a loud gasp of breath. The Monster cries out in pain. Frankenstein backs away. The Monster sits up and looks at Frankenstein, who is now frozen with fear. The Monster reaches out his hand.

MONSTER. Aaaa.....Maaaa.....Masssss....ter.

FRANKENSTEIN. Oh demon. Oh devil! Cursed be this day!

Blackout. The structure, gurney, and Monster are cleared. Lights up on Frankenstein walking furtively along a street—fearful, confused, and self-absorbed. Clerval enters, reading a book. She closes it when she sees Frankenstein.

CLERVAL. Ah, hermit, here you are removed from your microscope and compounds. Accompany me and see before you what is called a “view.” To your right you will espy something called a tree, and above you might see the flight of a bird. I will save you from your morbid devices to acquaint you with what is called “a walk.”

FRANKENSTEIN. I can’t...I fear...I must return, Clerval.

CLERVAL. *(A far more serious tone.)* To your corpse? Stay here with your friend, Victor. You harm yourself with overwork. You are thin as a wraith and closed in upon yourself like a locked box. You are barely recognizable.

FRANKENSTEIN. I cannot stay, my friend. Time is crucial. It may already be too late.

CLERVAL. *(Stopping him with her insistence.)* This is not science, Victor, this is obsession.

FRANKENSTEIN. I must awaken from the nightmare that I dream.

CLERVAL. *(After a pause.)* For this and only this would I release you.

Frankenstein exits. Clerval opens the book, then looks after the departed Frankenstein.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. How apropos.

(Reads.) "Like one who on a lonely road

Doth walk in fear and dread,

And, having once turn'd round, walks on,

And turns no more his head;

Because he knows a frightful fiend

Doth close behind him tread."

The Monster has entered behind Clerval. He looks after the departed Frankenstein, then makes a decision and moves toward Clerval. She senses something, turns, and screams. The Monster grabs her. Blackout. The lights return quickly. The Monster stands over the body of Clerval, as Frankenstein reenters, having heard the scream.

FRANKENSTEIN. My God, what have you done?

Frankenstein moves to Clerval's body.

MONSTER. You call me "demon" and "devil" and then abandon me. Why?

FRANKENSTEIN. You have killed. Vile monster, begone!

The Monster approaches Frankenstein.

MONSTER. You made me but do not know me.

FRANKENSTEIN. There is a pistol inside my coat. Begone or you must fall.

MONSTER. So you, my creator, detest your creature and purpose here to kill me?

FRANKENSTEIN. The tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for your crime.

MONSTER. Do your duty toward me, the child of your science, and I will do mine toward you and the rest of mankind. Care for me, guide me, and I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death until it is satiated with the blood of your remaining family and friends.

FRANKENSTEIN. There can be no community between us. Begone or I will shoot.

The lights shift. The Monster exits and Clerval's body is removed. Frankenstein pulls a letter from his coat as Elizabeth enters and speaks as he reads.

ELIZABETH. My dear cousin, I cannot describe to you the uneasiness we have all felt concerning your health and cannot help imagining the extent of your disorder. The loss of your friend Clerval must have greatly increased your misery, and your mother is certain that you have been exceedingly ill, which explains why you have not written. I cannot write myself into good spirits, so please Victor, if you are not very ill, write and make all of us happy. I cannot bear to think of the other side of the question; my tears already flow. Adieu, my dearest cousin. Elizabeth Lavenza.

Elizabeth and Frankenstein exit. Lights change. The Monster enters, exhausted, dirtier.

MONSTER. Why do I flee this man who made me? Cursed, cursed creator! Why do I live? Why is this spark of life so wantonly bestowed? Why do I suffer?

He crouches down. The light narrows.

In all the world I am alone. I know I am hunted—hiding in the day, traveling only by night. The very sight of me repels mankind and thus drives me mad with anger. The agony of my feelings allows me no respite. Only sleep. If there is a God, pray give me sleep.

He lies down on the stage. After a moment, a young boy enters and sees the monster unconscious on the floor.

WILLIAM. Sir, sir, are you all right?

He shakes the Monster gently.

You must wake, sir. You should not lie upon the ground, it is wet with rain.

The Monster, who has been lying face down, turns over and sees the boy. The boy screams. The Monster grabs him and tries to silence him.

MONSTER. Shhhh. Quietly.

WILLIAM. Let me go.

The boy tries to fight his way free.

MONSTER. I mean you no harm.

WILLIAM. Help! Help me!

MONSTER. No more, I beg of you.

WILLIAM. Monster! Ugly wretch!

MONSTER. Be silent.

WILLIAM. My father is Herr Frankenstein, an important tradesman in Geneva. He will see you punished.

MONSTER. Frankenstein? You are kin then to my enemy, Victor—

WILLIAM. My brother.

MONSTER. Against whom I have sworn eternal revenge. Your death will be part payment.

The Monster strangles the boy and breaks his neck, then sits back, looking at his victim. He sniffs him like an animal. He sits up.

No breath, I have done it. Yes, I too can create desolation; my enemy is not impregnable and the rabble with their shouts and stones will be silenced. This locket will confound them and this death will make them fear.

The Monster removes the locket from around the boy's neck.

(Almost a whisper.) Frankenstein, it is you who have done this. I come.

The lights cross-fade as the Monster and boy exit and Elizabeth enters. Frankenstein enters elsewhere and reads the letter as Elizabeth speaks.

ELIZABETH. Dear, dear cousin, this tragic circumstance demands I write you—your brother William has been murdered. He was discovered stretched on the road near the family home, bruised and motionless, the murderer's print on his broken neck. Come home, dearest cousin. Your family has need of you. With greatest concern, Elizabeth.

Lights change. Elizabeth exits as Frankenstein enters from another part of the stage.

FRANKENSTEIN. Another hour and I will reach Geneva.

The Monster enters at a distance, is seen fleetingly, and exits the stage far from Frankenstein.

What's that? A figure running? Giant strides.

He slaps his head.

My mind, my poor mind. I see monsters everywhere...and yet... where has he gone? What has he done?

Lights change. Frankenstein's mother enters and embraces him.

MOTHER. You've come. You've come!

FRANKENSTEIN. Oh mother, to lose William, I can hardly take it in. Where's father?

MOTHER. Taken to his bed, poor man—his grief overwhelming.

FRANKENSTEIN. And Elizabeth?

MOTHER. She indeed requires consolation, she is very wretched, but since the murderer has been discovered, she...

FRANKENSTEIN. Discovered?

MOTHER. It is past imagining that Justine Moritz, our neighbor's daughter, who was so amiable and fond of all the family, could become so wicked.

FRANKENSTEIN. Justine Moritz? Poor girl, is she accused? No one could believe such a thing. The letter said his neck was broken.

Elizabeth enters, having overheard the conversation.

ELIZABETH. It is beyond absurdity.

Elizabeth and Frankenstein embrace.

Dear cousin.

FRANKENSTEIN. Justine is innocent, Elizabeth, and that shall be proven.

MOTHER. I will tell your father you have arrived.

She exits.

ELIZABETH. How kind you are, Victor. The town is in uproar, everyone believes her guilt.

FRANKENSTEIN. Not everyone. You are exhausted.

ELIZABETH. I have tried to cheer and hearten Justine, but she is inconsolable. The trial will take place tomorrow.

FRANKENSTEIN. So soon?

ELIZABETH. It has rendered me both hopeless and despairing. I....

FRANKENSTEIN. Shhhh. Shhhh. (*Shakes his head.*) We will do what must be done.

ELIZABETH. You are a sight for sore eyes, Victor Frankenstein. With your arrival I may dare to hope.

Mother enters.

MOTHER. I have told your father you have arrived. He waits on you.

FRANKENSTEIN. Come with me to my father.

ELIZABETH. It is you he needs to see.

FRANKENSTEIN. (*Gently but firmly.*) Come with me.

They all exit. Lights change. A chair is brought by a bailiff.

BAILIFF. The court calls Karin Muller to the witness stand.

Karin Muller, a middle-aged woman, enters and sits.

KARIN. My name is Karin Muller. I sell dry goods in the market. As I was walking near the spot where the body of the murdered child was later found, I saw Justine Moritz looking very strangely. When I asked her what she did there, she uttered a confused and unintelligible answer. She then walked on. When we heard news of the boy's murder, we gathered at the sight. Justine was brought forward and when shown the body, she fell into violent hysterics. A locket was produced from her pocket, a locket which the boy had worn around his neck the evening before.

BAILIFF. You may step down. The court calls Justine Moritz to the stand.

Karin exits as Justine enters and sits.

JUSTINE. God knows how entirely I am innocent, but I do not pretend that my protestations should acquit me. I know how heavily and fatally this circumstance weighs against me, but I have no power of explaining it. How the locket came to be in my pocket, I cannot fathom. I commit my cause to the justice of my judges, yet I see no room for hope. I beg permission to have a witness testify concerning my character; and if their testimony shall not

overweigh my supposed guilt, I must be condemned, although I would pledge my salvation on my innocence.

Justine steps aside and Elizabeth takes the stand.

BAILIFF. Elizabeth Levanza.

ELIZABETH. I am the cousin of the unhappy child who was murdered. It may therefore be judged indecent of me to come forward on this occasion, but I do not hesitate to say, that, notwithstanding all the evidence produced against Justine Moritz, I believe and rely on her perfect innocence. She was warmly attached to the child who is now dead and had no temptation for such an action. As to the locket on which the chief proof rests, if she had earnestly desired it, I should have willingly given it to her; so much do I esteem and value her.

Lights change. The chair is removed by the bailiff. Frankenstein approaches Elizabeth.

FRANKENSTEIN. My dearest, it is decided as you may have expected. The ballots have been thrown. They were all black. Justine was condemned.

ELIZABETH. What can the court be thinking?

FRANKENSTEIN. All judges had rather ten innocents should suffer than one guilty should escape. But she has confessed.

Justine enters, led by the bailiff.

ELIZABETH. Oh, Justine! Why did you rob me of my last consolation? I relied on your innocence; and although I was then very wretched, I was not so miserable as I am now.

JUSTINE. Then God of heaven forgive me, but my confessor besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hellfire in my last moments. I did confess, that I might obtain absolution.

ELIZABETH. Oh Justine, forgive me for having for one moment distrusted you.

JUSTINE. Dear, sweet Elizabeth, do not weep.

ELIZABETH. I will proclaim your innocence and force belief.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



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