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Dramatic Publishing



FRANKENSTEIN

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(FRANKENSTEIN)

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FRANKENSTEIN
A Play In One Act
For Five Men, One Woman, One Creature

C H A R A C T E R S

HENRY CLerval
VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN
REBECCA NEVAL
INSPECTOR ERICKSON
TELEGRAM BOY
OFFICER KREPPS
THE CREATURE

TIME: 1837

PLACE: The London home of Henry Clerval

Elizabeth's body, seen only in Scene Six, may be played by the person who portrays Rebecca Neval.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The bedroom is sparsely furnished with a bed, dresser, small desk and chair being the only furniture. Shelves with beakers, test tubes and other laboratory equipment cover one wall.

The laboratory uses the same set, except a table is placed in the center.

Henry's study is furnished with a desk and chair, a couch, a liquor cabinet, two armchairs, two kerosene lamps, a window flat containing a break-away window and a door flat (or an imaginary door can be used offstage.)

The window frame is fitted with a break-away glass panel which can be purchased from any good theatrical distributing house, or a theatrical effects textbook can be consulted for formula of homemade sugar and water windows — and if you're on a tight budget, it's even less expensive if you just leave the window open and the creature climbs in.

Special Note: Kerosene lamps. One lamp is filled with water (to douse the creature with), the other is filled with kerosene and lit. When the inspector rushes offstage, he holds lit lamp as if he is about to hurl it at the creature. Offstage, a sound effect of breaking glass and a bright flash are synchronized with the action.

SCENE ONE

SCENE: A sparsely furnished bedroom in the home of Henry Clerval.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: HENRY and VICTOR, both carrying suitcases, enter.

HENRY. This is your new home, Victor. I'm afraid it's not terribly elaborate, but I think you'll find it adequate.

VICTOR. I'm sure it will suit me well. All I really need is a bed to sleep in and a place to work.

HENRY. Your laboratory is small but well stocked. I followed your list to the letter. If there's anything else . . .

VICTOR. You've already done too much. How can I ever repay you?

HENRY. Don't concern yourself with that. Come on, what say we have a drink? On me, of course. You'll have plenty of time to unpack later.

VICTOR. Please don't think me ungrateful, Henry, but I've so much to do that I need to be left alone for a while to set up the lab. I'm afraid I won't rest until I get that done.

HENRY (joking). It would seem that I'm being thrown out, Victor.

VICTOR. I wouldn't have put it in exactly those terms.

HENRY. Well, at least let me stay and help you set up your equipment. I'll put the things in your suitcase on these shelves and . . . (He picks up a suitcase. Glass is heard rattling inside it. VICTOR rushes over and takes it from HENRY.)

VICTOR. I said I don't need any help! (Then, apologetically.) I'm sorry, old friend. I need to be alone now so that I can get some rest.

HENRY (hurt). Of course. I understand. Will you be joining me later for dinner?

VICTOR. I think not. There's so much to do.

HENRY. Very well. I won't bother you any longer.

VICTOR. Henry, after I have things set up, there's so much I will want to share with you.

HENRY. I'll call on you in the morning after you've had some rest.

VICTOR. Yes, we'll breakfast together. (HENRY exits.

VICTOR begins arranging things from his suitcase. There is a knock on the door.) Now who can that be?

REBECCA (from offstage). Henry? Henry, are you in there?

(VICTOR opens the door. REBECCA stands at the door.)

VICTOR. Rebecca. I'm afraid that Henry just left.

REBECCA. Oh, I see. (Pause.) Well, are you going to invite me in, or shall I remain standing in the hallway?

VICTOR. Do you think that would be proper?

REBECCA. I won't bite, I promise. It's just that I haven't seen you in such a long time. I did expect more of a hello than this.

VICTOR. Of course. Forgive my manners. Please come in. (REBECCA enters the room and looks around. She sees the open suitcase on the bed.)

REBECCA. You're not unpacked yet? Please let me help. It looks like this room could certainly benefit from a woman's touch.

VICTOR. I'd rather you didn't, Rebecca. As I was just telling Henry, I like to arrange my own things.

REBECCA. Oh, I see. Well then, I'll just tidy things for . . .

VICTOR. No, Rebecca — really! Please don't trouble yourself over me.

REBECCA. It's no trouble at all, Victor. First let's get a little air in here. (She opens a window.) There, that's

better.

VICTOR. I really am particular about my room, Rebecca!
REBECCA (apparently hurt). In that case you won't mind if I just keep you company for awhile. We can talk.

VICTOR. But what about Henry? Won't he miss you?

REBECCA. I rather doubt it. You see, Henry spends most of his time with his experiments these days . . . much more than with me. Oh, Victor, I must be honest with you. It's because of Henry that I've come here to you tonight. I knew he wasn't here when I knocked on your door. I waited for him to leave. You're the only one I can speak to. You're his best friend.

VICTOR. Is there any problem, Rebecca?

REBECCA. Henry's become obsessed with his work. He can find time for little else.

VICTOR. Why, that sounds quite unlike Henry. He's always preferred a leisurely dinner to a stuffy laboratory. Just a few minutes ago he was trying to convince me to go out and have a drink with him. He certainly didn't seem in any hurry to get back to his work then.

REBECCA. That's because of you, Victor. I know you've talked to him somewhat about your work, but he's interested in finding out more. Whenever we are together, your name always becomes a part of the conversation.

VICTOR (sharply). What has he told you?

REBECCA. Only that you have succeeded in reviving dead animals for a short time by sending an electrical impulse through their bodies.

VICTOR. He had no right to tell you of my experiments!

REBECCA. You can trust me, Victor. I will never divulge your secret.

VICTOR. I have never fully confided in anyone. My father thought I found some perverse delight in cutting up dead animals. He never suspected what I was really after. (Pause.) I really don't know why I'm telling you all of this.

REBECCA. Because you've probably got so much locked away inside of you that you desperately need someone to talk to.

VICTOR. Maybe you're right. But my work . . . it's so . . . I really don't think you would understand.

REBECCA. I'll try.

VICTOR (long pause). It might be interesting at that . . . to get an unscientific woman's opinion.

REBECCA. I'm listening.

VICTOR. What would you say if I told you that reviving dead animals was only a part of my work. What would you say if I told you that I was convinced that I could actually create life?

REBECCA (probing). I'd say tell me more.

VICTOR. Just think! I could create a man with the body of an athlete, the mind of a genius. He could . . . (Realizing his frenzy, he stops. He turns away from REBECCA and attempts to compose himself.)

REBECCA. But how . . . what would bring him to life?

VICTOR. A sufficient dose of electricity, Rebecca, drawn from an electrical storm. The power of nature and the wisdom of science combined to create life. (Pause.) Will you go to Henry and report that I am insane?

REBECCA (calmly). Do you really think that you have a chance of succeeding?

VICTOR. I have been able to revive clinically dead dogs and cats, not for a short time as Henry thinks, but for indefinite periods. I'm now ready to attempt my experiments with humans.

REBECCA. Oh, Victor. Say you won't be . . . robbing graves!

VICTOR. No. By the time the bodies reach the grave, it is too late. Once rigor mortis has set in, the organs are useless. I'm sure someone at the morgue can be convinced to provide me with some fresh bodies . . . for a price,

that is.

REBECCA. But you have no money. How will you . . .

Victor, have you told anyone other than me about this?

VICTOR. No one. But I have thought about publishing my work to deflate some rather large egos in the scientific community.

REBECCA. Don't be a fool! I mean . . . they would laugh at you. If what you've told me is true, we . . . you can become rich . . . famous, and I can help. I have some money. With your genius and my money and charm . . . we should make quite a team. (She hastily embraces VICTOR.)

VICTOR. But money means nothing to . . .

(Suddenly the door is opened and HENRY, carrying a covered food tray, enters.)

HENRY (shocked). Forgive me for not knocking first, but I thought you were alone. Victor, I thought you might be hungry so I brought you something to eat, but you obviously would rather not be disturbed!

VICTOR. Henry, this isn't . . . you don't understand at all!

HENRY. I think I do understand. I think I understand perfectly! (He exits the room hurriedly.)

VICTOR (calling after him). Henry!

REBECCA. Let him go. I'll speak with him. He'll be fine. (Pause.) I think I'd better leave now. We'll talk again. (As the scene closes, REBECCA exits the room with a scheming grin on her face. Lights fade.)