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## **Family Plays**

# Frankenstein: The Monster Play

Drama adapted by  
CHRISTOPHER O'NEAL

Based on the novel by  
MARY SHELLEY



# Frankenstein: The Monster Play

"A tremendous success ... I heartily recommend the production for young and old." (Diane L. Davis, Permian Playhouse, Odessa, Texas)

*Drama. Adapted by Christopher O'Neal. Based on the novel by Mary Shelley. Cast: 6m., 3w., extras. The cast may be enlarged by adding more servants and villagers. This dramatization of the Mary Shelley novel captures all the horror, mystery and suspense that the world has come to associate with the title Frankenstein. We see the monster come to life in the laboratory. We see his innocent curiosity as he stumbles around in his strange new world. We see him longing for friendship and affection from other creatures ... especially from Dr. Frankenstein's kind and beautiful fiancée, Elizabeth. We see the world reject him and hate him simply because he is different. And we see him become a ferocious, terrifying monster because he had no other way to go. Frankenstein: The Monster Play is a sensitive, suspenseful, horror-filled drama for all groups. This version adheres to the novel much more faithfully than the movie versions do. Shelley's monster was intelligent, curious and yearning for companionship. Among other things, the Frankenstein monster symbolizes the uncontrollable monster that science can become. And, of course, the monster symbolizes all the misfits in the world—the unloved, unwanted specimens of humankind. Since the monster does not look like the rest of us, we call him ugly and we fear him. And because we fear him, we want to destroy him. Shelley gave her monster a kind and tender heart, a love for people and a desire to be loved in return. But he was never loved, not by one single person. The play may be performed simply or elaborately. Standard language allows it to be set in the 1800s or today. The flexibility allows each director to stage the scenes as taste and available equipment dictate. Included are exciting roles for the major characters and small roles for others. Set: the parlor and attic of the Frankenstein home. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: FD6.*

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(FRANKENSTEIN: THE MONSTER PLAY)

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# FRANKENSTEIN

## The Monster Play

### Characters

**Dr. Victor Frankenstein**, *a scientific genius*

**Elizabeth Lavenza**, *a beautiful young lady*

**Mrs. Frankenstein**, *Victor's mother*

**Henry Clerval**, *Victor's friend*

**Willa**, *Victor's sister*

**Justine Moritz**, *Willa's pretty "companion"*

**Igor**, *Dr. Frankenstein's lab assistant*

**The Monster**

**Felix**, *a villager*

**Maria**, *Felix's wife*

**Servant** (*male or female*)

**Nurse**

*Additional Servants and additional Villagers  
of either sex may be added, if desired*

**Place:** *The Frankenstein home in a European village*

**Time:** *November, 1800 (or the time may be the present)*

### Synopsis

**ACT I, Scene 1:** *Around midnight*

**Scene 2:** *An hour later*

**ACT II:** *Two days later, at sunset*

**ACT III:** *The next evening*

## ABOUT THE PLAY

This dramatization of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was designed so that it can be staged by any group of players—rich or poor, youth or adult, experienced or inexperienced, with magnificent technical facilities or with none.

The play may be set in the year 1800 (the approximate time of Mary Shelley's story) or in the present. Or the play may be given a timeless quality by using costumes without distinct period styling. The standard language of this script fits any period. Neither the stilted formal speech of the Shelley novel nor modern colloquialisms were used.

The set may be very simple (see floor plans, p. 52), or very elaborate. If your production is set in 1800, very little if any electrical apparatus can be used, since almost nothing was known about electricity at the time (there had been a few experiments, such as Benjamin Franklin's famous kite and key). The Shelley novel conveniently avoids showing how life was given to the creature by proclaiming that the secret would not be revealed to prevent others from creating such a horrible monster. In this script a thunderstorm provides a background for the life-inducing process, and a brilliant bolt of lightning effectively marks the moment of life-creation. However, the director is at liberty to choose other methods of generating the spark of life—including Hollywood's flashing, arcing electrical apparatus with wires connected to electrodes protruding from the monster's neck. The flexibility of this dramatization allows each producer to stage the scene as taste and available equipment dictate.

The basic cast of 5 men and 7 women may be enlarged by adding more servants and villagers. The major characters provide exciting roles, and there are small parts for beginners or those who have little time to rehearse. See page 49 for a discussion of the roles.

This dramatization adheres to the Shelley novel much more faithfully than the movie versions do. Mary Shelley's monster was intelligent, curious, and yearning for companionship (and her novel even prophesies modern organ transplants). Among other things, the Frankenstein monster symbolizes the uncontrollable monster that science can become. While science benefits mankind on one hand, it also destroys men if it is not kept under strict control. And, of course, the monster symbolizes all the misfits in the world—the unloved, unwanted specimens of humankind. Because he does not look like the rest of us, we call him ugly and we fear him. And because we fear him, we want to destroy him. We do not take the time to look beneath the ugliness or to ask what his needs and desires are. Mary Shelley gave her monster a kind and tender heart, a love for people, and a desire to be loved in return. But he was never loved, not by one single person.

This play was written with these thoughts in mind. Think about them as you direct or perform this play, and your production can't help but be a tremendous success.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Properties

#### **ACT I, Scene 1:**

sheet—covering Monster, in laboratory  
 ragged blanket—covering Igor, in laboratory  
 bottles of chemicals—on laboratory work table  
 scientific apparatus—on laboratory work table (NOTE: the director is at liberty to use modern or early nineteenth century scientific apparatus—see note on p. 13)  
 walking cane—Mrs. Frankenstein  
 candle & taper—on laboratory work table  
 jar (gallon size or larger) of reddish-black liquid (blood)—on rolling table in lab (a jar of similar size to receive the liquid is concealed behind the operating table; this concealed jar must be removed during the first intermission)  
 rubber tubing—on the rolling table  
 breakaway bottle or other easily breakable object (see p. 17)—on parlor table  
 gold locket on a chain—in table drawer in parlor  
 poker—at fireplace in parlor

#### **ACT I, Scene 2:**

feather—on laboratory work table  
 bottle of beverage—in cabinet in laboratory  
 loaf of bread—in cabinet in laboratory  
 broom—in laboratory (the broom should be previously broken and lightly glued back together so that the Monster can break it like a matchstick)  
 poker—at fireplace in parlor

#### **ACT II:**

torch—Felix  
 bits of food—in laboratory cabinet  
 tray of food—Elizabeth

#### **ACT III:**

pistol—Henry  
 large cloth sack—in laboratory  
 notebook—in laboratory  
 torches—Felix & Maria  
 heavy club—Felix  
 (torches, pitchforks, etc.—other Villagers, if used)

### The Cast

There is virtually no maximum size to the cast, since as many Villagers may be used as your stage will hold. Several Servants may also be included in the cast. If it is necessary to reduce the cast size, the Servant and the Nurse may be the same person (instead of calling her "Nurse," the other characters may call her by name—Sarah, perhaps).

Most of the cast members are characterized as they are introduced in the text: *Dr. Victor Frankenstein* is quiet, withdrawn, a scientific genius "deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge." He can be gentle and tender at times, but for the most part—probably because he is nervous and high-strung—he is impatient, gruff, and even rude. *Elizabeth* is a beautiful young lady with a good sense of humor. Calmer by nature than Victor, she tends to calm him down when they are alone together. *Henry Clerval* is Victor's best friend. Mary Shelley describes him as the son of a merchant who wouldn't send him to college, a man who loved danger for



its own sake. Henry loves to laugh and have fun, and he has the sense of humor to do so. *Mrs. Frankenstein* is a devoted mother, completely wrapped up in her family and proud of their accomplishments. She does interesting things with her cane. *Willa* may be any age from 10 to about 14. She is mentally retarded so that she acts and thinks and talks like a very young child. (NOTE: If the director wishes, a young child—not retarded—may be used for this role. No line changes are necessary.) *Justine* is Willa's nurse, companion, governess—take your choice of appellation. She is very pretty, sweet, and congenial. *Igor* is the comic-relief character. He should be small to contrast with the monster. He is misshapen, perhaps with a hump on his back. He is lively, happy-go-lucky, and as agile as his crippled body will allow him to be. The role may be played by a girl (but should appear to be a male character). Igor is not mentally retarded. He has had no schooling—and he may be a foreigner to the locale of the play, thus accounting for his clipped and sparse manner of speaking.

*The Monster* is presented by Mary Shelley as intelligent, extremely curious, and—in the beginning—fond of life and everything around him. He is, as Elizabeth says, forced to become a brutal beast because he had “no other way to go.” He is a horribly ugly misfit in a world that worships beauty and normalcy. In the beginning, he has a child-like curiosity—in fact, he quickly goes through the development of a new-born baby: investigating his body, learning to crawl, learning to walk, investigating the world around him—and trying to learn to talk. The role should be played by the tallest actor available, and he can be made even taller by built-up shoes or even low stilts tied securely to his legs. He must appear to be exceedingly strong. Opportunities are provided in the script for the Monster to display his great strength; the director and actor should look for other opportunities. He must be made up to appear exceedingly ugly. How far the make-up artist wants to go in imitating the movie Frankenstein monsters is, of course, up to each director. An unnatural skin color seems inevitable—perhaps a greenish-gray, with stitches and stitching scars in red, and perhaps prominent veins in blue and black. Hopefully, he will be ugly enough to make the audience gasp the first time they see him.

### Costumes

The play may be set in the year 1800, or in the present.

**ACT I, Scene 1: Victor**—everyday clothing covered by a laboratory coat or smock. **Elizabeth, Henry, and Mrs. Frankenstein**—party clothes and outdoor wraps. **Willa**—a nightgown. **Justine**—a house dress. **Igor**—ragged, worn-out trousers and peasant blouse. **The Monster**—crudely made and very bad-fitting trousers, coat, and shoes. **Servants**—servants' costumes.

**ACT I, Scene 2: Victor**—the same clothes as in Scene 1. **Elizabeth**—a nightgown and robe or a dress. **Henry**—casual day-time clothing.

**ACT II: Victor**—same as in Act I, or change to similar costume. **Mrs. Frankenstein**—dressing gown. **Nurse**—nurse's or servant's costume. **Henry**—sporting or hiking suit (since he expects to join in the hunt for the Monster). **Elizabeth**—casual dress. **Felix**—peasant blouse, heavy trousers, boots, hat. **Maria**—peasant dress, shawl.

**ACT III: Victor**—clothing similar to previous acts (may be same costume) but now wrinkled and unkempt. **Elizabeth**—wedding gown (her face should be made up to show deep lines under her eyes and other signs of the stress she has been under). **Henry**—same as or similar to preceding costume. **Felix & Maria**—same as previously. **The Monster**—same costume, but it may now be caked with mud and grime.

### Lights, Sound, and Special Effects

This script is designed so that it can be presented very simply, with no special lighting effects at all, and the fire effects at the end of the play are within the capabilities of everybody. The Golden Age Greeks and the Elizabethan stage depended upon the imagination of audience members for special effects, and today's audiences still have imagination—and every play calls for them to use it. The dialogue tells the audience what time it is, what the weather is like, and so on.

For stages with dimmers and other lighting facilities, these suggestions may be helpful: Changing the intensity of illumination in the two main playing areas will help focus attention where the director wants it. When the main action is in the parlor, the laboratory area lighting may be dimmed, and vice-versa. The sunset described on page 29 can be effectively represented through the windows of the set by using red and yellow floodlights outside the windows. As night comes on, blue light can replace the red and yellow.

The thunderstorm can also be seen through the windows. Flashbulbs provide realistic lightning; so do strobelights. The simplest way to make lightning is to screw a floodlight lamp loosely into a reflector and flicker it by quickly screwing tighter and unscrewing. The lightning bolt that flashes in the laboratory may be handled by concealing a flashbulb (or several flashbulbs) behind a piece of furniture. Bass drums or tympani provide realistic thunder, as do the old reliable sheet metal thunder sheets. Recordings of thunderstorms are also available.

Safety must always be the first consideration on a stage. The lighted torches may be safely represented by wrapping light cardboard around a flashlight and covering the end of the tube (torch) with red gelatin. The actor can flicker the flashlight to give a torch-like effect.

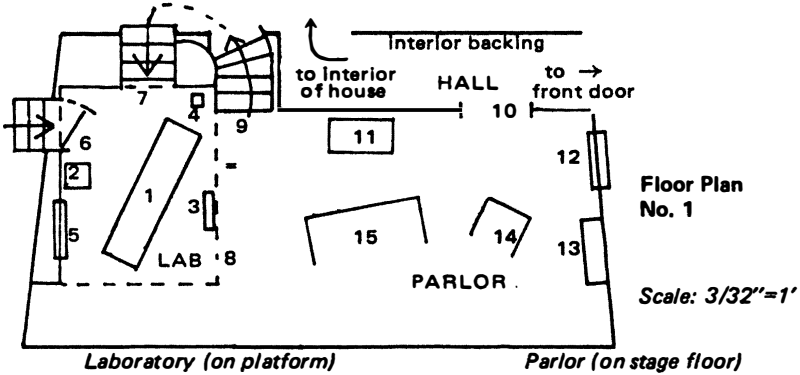
Hand-held red floodlights outside the windows can provide the glow of the torches supposedly carried by the mob. The floodlights should be jiggled and bounced as people would do with torches. The flickering and bouncing can also be handled with a dimmer, of course. The burning of the house can be handled in the same way. As the flames engulf the house, the floodlights can be dimmed up or brought closer to the windows. One of several effective ways of representing flames is to cut jagged lengths of red and yellow silk cloth, glue them to a rod, and place an electric fan near them so the wind from the fan will blow the cloth in a flame-like manner. Smoke from a smoke machine will add to the effect. Flooding the entire stage with red light at the end of the play will complete the effect.

The Monster's bleeding can be handled with stage blood. A small amount in a thin ampule taped to the poker will produce a flow of blood when Justine hits the Monster. Two or three similar capsules of stage blood taped to the Monster's fingers will simulate the tearing of his flesh when he claws his face at the end of the play.

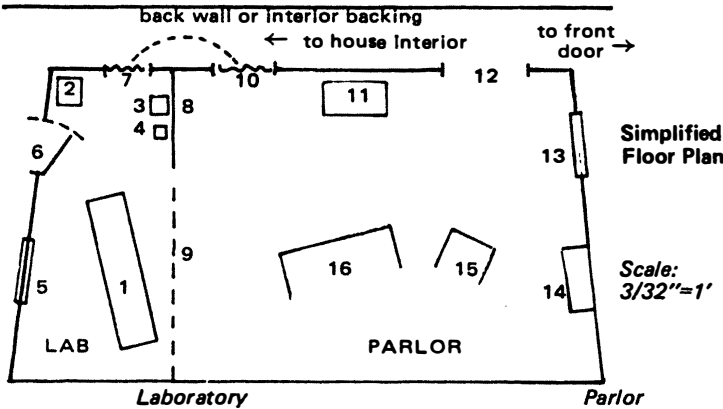
Among the sound effects suggested in the script are "morning sounds"—the crowing of a rooster, barking dog, singing bird. Recordings of these are easily obtainable. The mob sounds can also be found on stock sound-effects records, or you can make your own tape. Stagehands, offstage actors, etc., can also make the mob sounds "live." The breaking door can be a recording, or thin plywood can be broken (place one end on an elevated surface—a stool or a block of wood—and let the sound man stomp on it). If a breakway pane of glass is used when the Monster throws Igor out of the laboratory, the sound of breaking glass must accompany the action. This sound effect can be made by pouring broken glass from one bucket into another.

**The Set**

Below are a fairly complex design and a very simple one. The illusion of winding stairs to the attic (a story and a half above the parlor) requires the performer to remain offstage for a few beats on his way up or down.



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1—operating table</li> <li>2—work table</li> <li>3—cabinet</li> <li>4—rolling table (on casters)</li> <li>5—window</li> <li>6—outside door &amp; steps to ground</li> <li>7—attic portion of winding stairs</li> <li>8—low profile piece to represent wall</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9—parlor portion of winding stairs</li> <li>10—opening into hallway</li> <li>11—table, with drawer</li> <li>12—window</li> <li>13—fireplace, with mirror above it</li> <li>14—armchair</li> <li>15—sofa</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Other set decorations as desired</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1—operating table</li> <li>2—work table</li> <li>3—cabinet</li> <li>4—small table on casters</li> <li>5—window</li> <li>6—door to outside (supposedly an outdoor stairway leads to ground)</li> <li>7—curtained opening leading to (make-believe) winding stairs to parlor</li> <li>8—screens, flats, or other type of wall</li> <li>9—imaginary wall (a low divider, potted plants, etc., may be used if desired)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10—curtained opening leading to attic stairs</li> <li>11—parlor table, with drawer</li> <li>12—opening into entrance hall (front door off Left; interior off Right)</li> <li>13—window</li> <li>14—fireplace, with mirror above it</li> <li>15—armchair</li> <li>16—sofa</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Other furniture and set decorations as desired</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

# FRANKENSTEIN: The Monster Play

By Christopher O'Neal

*[The setting is the parlor and attic of the Frankenstein home, a fairly large, comfortable house in a European village (see suggested floor plans on page 52). The parlor occupies about two-thirds of the stage and contains a sofa, one or two armchairs, and a table with a drawer. There is a fireplace with a mirror above it, a window near the fireplace, and an opening leading into the hallway. At one end of the hallway is the front door (not visible to the audience). The other end of the hallway leads to the interior of the house.*

*The attic is represented by a platform and contains an operating table, a work table containing scientific equipment and apparatus, a small table on casters, and a small cabinet. The attic has an outside door with steps leading down to the ground. Near the door is a window. An indoor stairway leads down to the parlor—visible to the audience are a few steps in the attic and a few more steps in the parlor. We can assume that offstage—and therefore not visible to the audience—the two step units are connected by a winding stairway (see Floor Plans, p. 52).*

*AT RISE: The parlor is empty. In the attic laboratory the MONSTER lies on the operating table, but he is completely covered by a sheet and we cannot see him—in fact, unless we look very, very closely we are not even aware that he is there. In an obscure corner, IGOR lies asleep beneath a ragged blanket; he, too, is invisible to all but the most perceptive eyes. At the work table stands DR. VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN, mixing chemicals. He is a nervously energetic, pale and thin man in his middle twenties, completely dedicated to his scientific work. He wears a laboratory smock over his regular clothes. If possible, the laboratory area is not as brightly lighted as the parlor. DR. FRANKENSTEIN moves very little—just enough to catch the audience's eye so they will know he is there, and wonder what he is doing.*

*After a beat or two, we hear happy, laughing voices offstage approaching the front door. When they enter the front door and reach the hallway, we discover that the voices belong to ELIZABETH LAVENZA, MRS. FRANKENSTEIN, and HENRY CLERVAL.*

*ELIZABETH is a beautiful young lady, in her late teens or early*

twenties. She is poised and vivacious, and at present she is laughing and talking happily. *MRS. CAROLINE BEAUFORT FRANKENSTEIN* is the mother of Victor and the guardian of Elizabeth. She has a typical devoted mother's love for and pride in her family. She carries a cane because she has a heart condition and the doctor insists that she use the cane. But when she is feeling well—as she is tonight—she uses it more to poke people and punctuate her speech than to assist her walking. *HENRY CLERVAL* is Victor's best friend, a handsome young man in his middle twenties, not as intelligent or as well educated as Victor, but much more robust and healthy looking. The three have just come from a party celebrating the coming marriage of Victor and Elizabeth, and all three are in a happy and frivolous mood—even if they were unable to talk Victor into attending the party with them.

A *SERVANT* enters the hall (from the interior of the house) and takes their coats and wraps. It is a chilly night in November, just before midnight. The *SERVANT* exits through the hallway, while the others enter the parlor]

*ELIZABETH.* What a wonderful party! I'm exhausted! [*She drops gracefully onto the sofa, sighing with weariness, but so happy and excited that she laughs off the sigh*]

*HENRY.* Is that the test of a good party—that it's exhausting? [*Laughing, too, as he crosses to the fireplace*] Well, don't exhaust all your energy too soon, my dear Elizabeth. There'll be a hundred more parties before the wedding, and you've got to have enough energy for two.

*MRS. FRANKENSTEIN.* For two?

*HENRY.* [*Warming himself at the fireplace but glancing frequently toward the hallway as though he is expecting someone*] Well, obviously we're not going to get Victor to many of these affairs. Elizabeth will have to serve as both guests of honor—bride and groom.

*MRS. FRANKENSTEIN.* [*She taps Henry on the shoulder with her cane—no one criticizes her son in her presence*] My son is more interested in his work [*pointing to the attic steps with her cane*] than he is in frivolity. [*She crosses to the sofa, sees that Elizabeth is sitting where she wants to sit, and taps her with the cane. ELIZABETH moves a little and MRS. FRANKENSTEIN sits beside her*]

*ELIZABETH.* Well, I wish he'd find a little time for frivolity. His—

*[she almost says "fiancee"]* family needs him as much as his work does. What is he so involved with up there in the attic?

HENRY. It's best not to ask unless you want a thunderstorm. *[Looks toward the stairs]* Maybe he's got a harem up there. *[HENRY and ELIZABETH laugh. MRS. FRANKENSTEIN is shocked]*

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. Henry Clerval! How could you say such a thing!

ELIZABETH. *[Stops laughing]* Maybe it's true! It could be anything for all we know.

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. *[Tapping Elizabeth on the foot with her cane]* Oh pooh, Elizabeth! Once you're married you'll be wishing you could get him out from under foot once in a while.

ELIZABETH. At least he could come down and let us tell him about the party before we go to bed. *[On an impulse she rises suddenly and heads for the stairs. MRS. FRANKENSTEIN tries to stop her with the cane, but too late. HENRY, with a concerned look, steps out after her]*

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. Elizabeth! You know Henry will be furious—

ELIZABETH. I know. *[She hesitates for a moment. Then she decides in her favor and goes part way up the stairs. She calls loudly]* Victor! We're home! *[VICTOR glances toward the stairs as an indication that he heard. There is some apprehension in his glance—fear that she might come up. HENRY cocks an ear toward the parlor end of the stairs as if listening]*

HENRY. Anybody hear thunder—or an avalanche crashing? *[They all laugh and agree that something like that will probably happen. ELIZABETH returns to the sofa; HENRY remains near the stairs]*

ELIZABETH. Well, at least he can't say he didn't know we were here. *[WILLA comes running through the hall and into the parlor. She is Victor's little sister, about 12 to 14. Willa is retarded; she is not severely handicapped but she does not comprehend all that goes on around her—she lives in the world of a four or five-year-old child. She is wearing a nightgown]*

WILLA. You're home! You're home! *[She runs to the sofa and drapes herself around Elizabeth's feet. Not far behind her is JUSTINE MORITZ, Willa's "companion." She is 18 or 19, an attractive girl but lacking Elizabeth's grace and poise. Although she is obviously chasing Willa, she glances at Henry as she enters, and it is clear now why Henry looked toward the hall so frequently. Justine wears a house dress]*

JUSTINE. I'm sorry, Mrs. Frankenstein. There was no holding her when she heard your voices. She can't understand why she couldn't go to the party.

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. It's all right, Justine. She can stay down for a little while.

ELIZABETH. *[With a knowing smile at Henry]* I suppose that means Justine will have to stay awake just a little longer, too.

HENRY. Oh, what a pity. Then it is my duty as a gentleman to entertain her. What burdens we gentlemen find placed upon us! *[All laugh. He goes to JUSTINE and they retreat to the fireplace, where they converse in inaudible tones. In the laboratory, VICTOR has been putting his chemicals away. He removes his lab smock and prepares to come down—much against his wishes]*

WILLA. Lizbuth. Tell me about party.

ELIZABETH. Well—there was a nice dinner—and everybody drank a toast—

WILLA. Drink toast? How?

ELIZABETH. I should have said, everybody expressed—wished good health and happiness for Victor and me.

WILLA. *[Looking around]* Where Vicka?

ELIZABETH. He didn't go to the party. He's working. *[Like a flash, before anybody can anticipate her move, WILLA is on her feet running to the stairs. VICTOR has already begun descending the stairs from the laboratory]*

WILLA. I get him!

*[ELIZABETH, JUSTINE, and HENRY all take out after Willa at the same time, but she is already on her way up the stairs. She disappears only to reappear almost instantly being led down the stairs by VICTOR. He is greatly upset]*

VICTOR. You *must* not let her up these stairs. My equipment is dangerous. Can't you understand that entering that room could mean death—for any of you!

WILLA. *[Not understanding—and not the least bit afraid of Victor or his noise]* Why?

JUSTINE. We'd better go back up to bed now, sweetums.

WILLA. *[Protesting audibly and physically]* No! Not bed! Wanna go to party!

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. She may stay a little longer, Justine.

WILLA. *[She breaks away from Victor and again wraps herself around the feet of ELIZABETH, who has returned to the sofa]* Elizabeth my friend! *[ELIZABETH pets her lovingly]*

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. *[Looking at her son fondly]* Come and sit down for a while, Victor dear. *[VICTOR greets Henry and starts to sit in an armchair. She pats the sofa]* Here, between your mother and your beautiful but *[pointedly]* lonely fiancée.

WILLA. What's a fee—fee—what, Mama?

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. "Fiancée," dear. You'd better learn that word—you'll be hearing it quite often, I suspect.

WILLA. Fee—?

ELIZABETH. "Fiancée." That's a young lady who is engaged to be married to a young man.

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. Elizabeth is Victor's fiancée because she is going to marry him.

WILLA. *[Grabbing Victor's legs]* I marry Vicka, too! *[All laugh (it is gentle laughter) except VICTOR, who hasn't heard any of this. His mind is still in his laboratory. He looks down at Willa and wonders what she is doing holding on to his legs]*

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. No, dear. You can't marry Victor, too. First of all, a man can have only one wife—

HENRY. At a time.

ELIZABETH. *[Laughing]* Don't confuse her, Henry. *[Patting Willa's head]* A man should have only one wife for all time, Willa.

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. *[Determined to complete her lesson, even though all this has been told to Willa many times. She uses her cane like a pointer]* And secondly, you and Victor are sister and brother.

WILLA. Lizbeth my sister.

ELIZABETH. No, dear. Although I've grown up in this house like a child of the family, I'm really not your sister—or Victor's.

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. I found Elizabeth in a home that couldn't feed her when she was just a tiny baby—and I brought her to live with us. *[She looks at Elizabeth with as much love and pride as a mother can]* And we've been so glad.

ELIZABETH. So have I, Mother.

WILLA. Me, too!

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. *[Trying gently to prod Willa with her cane]* Now it's way, way past your bedtime, little angel. Justine, will you take her up, please?



WILLA. No! I stay! I always got to go bed! [*She tries to jerk her hand out of Justine's*]

JUSTINE. That's because you're still a little girl. [*She tries to pull Willa to her feet*]

WILLA. Vicka! Vicka! They hurtin' me!

VICTOR. [*Willa's call brings him back to the group. He looks at her*] Oh? What's wrong?

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. Didn't you hear us, dear? It's Willa's bedtime.

HENRY. And she doesn't like the idea. [*Mock whisper, with a glance at Justine*] Neither do I, Willa.

VICTOR. [*Kneeling down beside Willa*] Well, I want my little sister to grow up to be healthy and beautiful—like Elizabeth. And for that to happen, you need your beauty sleep.

WILLA. I wanna stay at party.

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. It's the sleep you get before midnight that counts most—and it's after midnight!

VICTOR. The party's over. But there'll be another one, soon—[*for a fleeting moment we can see that the prospect is not pleasing for him*] and you'll be ready because you've had your beauty sleep. Besides . . . [*looking at the others meaningfully—almost a command*] everybody else is going to sleep, too.

WILLA. Awright. [*She jumps up happily and runs to the hallway, dragging JUSTINE behind her*] Beauty sleep.

ALL. [*Ad lib*] Good night, Willa. Good night, Justine. Sleep well.

JUSTINE. Good night, everybody. [*She looks an extra moment at Henry, then exits with WILLA*]

HENRY. Time for me to be going, too. It's been a delightful evening—as always when I'm with the delightful Frankensteins.

ELIZABETH. And the Frankensteins are grateful to their delightful friend, Henry Clerval, for thinking we are so delightful!

HENRY. Good night, delightful Victor. [*He grimaces a little to show his mild sarcasm. But VICTOR misses the look; his mind is off and away again. He "comes to" when HENRY pats him on the shoulder and extends his hand. VICTOR rises, shakes hands with HENRY, and escorts him to the door*]

VICTOR. Good night, Henry. Thank you for taking Elizabeth and Mother to the party for me. I'll see you again soon?

HENRY. Of course—if we can ever get you out of that laboratory.

There's another affair for the engaged couple Saturday night, you know.

VICTOR. [*With a sigh*] There is?

HENRY. Yes, and you ought to go. People will begin to talk if your best friend *always* has the pleasure of escorting your bride-to-be. [*He turns to leave, then turns back*] And you'd better get some beauty sleep, too. You look like you need it more than Willa.

VICTOR. Yes. Well, good night. [*HENRY exits. ELIZABETH and MRS. FRANKENSTEIN rise. ELIZABETH crosses to Victor*]

ELIZABETH. Henry's right, Victor. You do look tired. I know your work is important—but . . . I hope your family and I . . .

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. What she means, dear, is that you have to think of us, too. Your mother is extremely proud of her dear boy's outstanding record at the university. And I have no doubt you are accomplishing untold wonders with your experiments. But you can't spend all your days and nights in that dreary laboratory—

VICTOR. [*Quickly*] How do you know it's dreary! You haven't—

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. No, dear, don't get excited. You asked us to stay out, and you know that elephants couldn't drag us in against your wishes.

VICTOR. [*Apologetically*] It's dangerous for you to go in there, that's all.

MRS. FRANKENSTEIN. Well, I do wish you'd get some sleep. [*Poking him with her cane*] Nothing is more important than good health. [*She waits for a reply, gets none, crosses to the hallway*] Well, good night. Coming, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH. Yes. In a moment. [*MRS. FRANKENSTEIN exits. ELIZABETH puts her hands on Victor's shoulders*] We're only trying to take care of you, darling. I can't very well marry you if you work yourself to death.

VICTOR. [*Looking at her tenderly, putting his arms at her waist*] I know. And don't worry. My experiment is nearly finished.

ELIZABETH. [*Playfully*] Can I have a little peek?

VICTOR. Yes. After it's finished.

ELIZABETH. [*Petulant—part real, part playful*] Why not now? [*No answer*] We played together in the attic as little children—and you stole your first kiss there . . .and now, all of a sudden, I'm shut out!

VICTOR. Just for a while—to protect you from danger.

ELIZABETH. But I'm shut out of your life, too! [*Turning away from him*] Did you ask me to marry you because you love me—or because—

VICTOR. *[Going to her]* Elizabeth—

ELIZABETH. *[She moves away]* It was your father's dying wish—your mother has always assumed—so now, just because everybody expects it—

VICTOR. *[Grabbing her]* Hush. I don't have to marry you in spite of their expectations. *[She struggles to get away]* I want to marry you—*[her struggles lessen]* because I love you. *[He is about to kiss her; just before their lips touch, she pulls away, playful again]*

ELIZABETH. Prove it! Show me what's in the attic!

VICTOR. I want to, my darling. More than anything I want you beside me while I work—but—but— *[His eyes begin to flash with animation and his voice has an unexpected excitement]* Oh, Elizabeth—my experiments are—there are no words—exciting! exhilarating! I wish I could tell you—show you—

ELIZABETH. Tell me! Show me!

VICTOR. *[For a moment he seems about to tell her everything; but his better judgment says no]* I can't.

ELIZABETH. Why not? I love you, darling. I love everything about you—and I know I'd love whatever it is you're doing up there if you'd only— *[He shakes his head; she pulls away]* I never thought I'd be jealous of a test tube!

VICTOR. *[Pulling her back to him]* All these years you have been the beautiful and adored companion of my work and my play—and soon you will be mine alone to protect and love and cherish forever . . . *[Backing away to look into her eyes]* But I'm afraid—afraid that if I tell you about my work . . . you may try to—stop me—

ELIZABETH. Is it something terrible, Victor? Something . . . illegal—

VICTOR. *[Exhilarated]* It's something that no one has ever done before—something that will change the history of mankind. What would you say if I told you I can create a world without disease—without deformities! A world in which man will be immune to any but a violent death!

ELIZABETH. I don't understand. How—

VICTOR. *[Getting more and more excited]* A new species will bless me as its creator! *[He can keep himself away from his laboratory no longer. He turns and runs to the stairway]* The time is nearly here!

*[He dashes up the stairs. ELIZABETH watches after him for a moment, shaking her head in frustration and disappointment, then exits through the hallway. VICTOR appears again, still running, on the*

*attic portion of the stairs and into the laboratory. If possible, the laboratory lights should come up as the parlor lights dim down]*

VICTOR. Igor! Igor! Wake up! *[There is movement from the bundle of rags in the corner. VICTOR throws on his lab smock]* Igor—it's time! Get up, you lazy mound of flesh! *[He kicks the bundle of rags. IGOR gets to his feet. He is misshapen, crippled, dressed in rags]*

IGOR. Igor is awake. Igor never sleeps.

VICTOR. Igor always sleeps. If what I just told my sister Willa about sleep is true, Igor should be the most beautiful creature in the world.

IGOR. *[Trying to walk like a beauty queen]* Igor is beautiful. *[He laughs—or at least he does what he thinks is laughing; what comes out is a gurgling, yukking sound that would scare the spooks on Halloween]*

VICTOR. *[Patting the hump on Igor's back]* If our experiment is successful . . . no—when our experiment is successful, I will give Igor new parts so that he really will be beautiful.

IGOR. Igor will be happy.

*[An early winter storm is coming down out of the mountains. Distant rolls of thunder can be heard, and an intermittent, faint flash of lightning can be seen through the laboratory window. IGOR lights a candle and places it near the operating table. (NOTE: While this play follows Mary Shelley's novel as closely as possible, the director is at liberty to use more of the Hollywood clichés if he wishes. If the director decides to use electrical apparatus to bring the Monster to life, obviously a candle would not be lighted here.) VICTOR rolls a small table containing a large jar of red liquid to the operating table. Connected to the jar is a long tube, which VICTOR apparently attaches to an artery in the neck of the creature under the sheet (actually he connects the tube to another container on the upstage side of the table). The following conversation takes place as he makes the attachments]*

VICTOR. Here, Igor, is the elixir of life! The liquid in this jar is man-made blood, and when it begins its course through this lifeless body, the body will come alive!

IGOR. Igor must see to believe.

VICTOR. To examine the causes of life, we must first study death. And when we have thoroughly understood the change from life to death, we can begin to understand the change from death to life.