

MOVIE MONSTERS

By JD Atkins

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SYNOPSIS: *Action!* The scariest A-List in Hollywood have come together to film the biggest monster movie of all time! Frankenstein, Dracula, Creature, Scarecrow, and the Invisible Man (possibly) are all on location, but production takes a terrifying turn when famed monster hunter Van Helsing seemingly returns from beyond the grave to haunt his former foes. Frankenstein's younger sister Frankie decides catching this specter of the silver screen might be her ticket to stardom—but with only a pair of bonehead skeletons and a washed-up former “Tween Wolf” for help, cutting Van Helsing from the script will be anything but a simple edit. When the director calls places, only Frankenstein Ninety-Nine has a ghost of a chance to save the world's greatest *MOVIE MONSTERS!*

DURATION: 90 minutes.

SETTING: Chateau Black, a gothic castle.

TIME: Modern Day.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 13-19 either, 0-20 extras)

- DRACULA (m/f) Iconic vampire of legend. A preening “A-List” movie star. *(64 lines)*
- FRANKENSTEIN (m/f) Original Frankenstein’s Monster. A gruff “A-List” movie star, and Frankie’s older sibling. *(103 lines)*
- CREATURE (m/f) A sea creature from a certain lagoon. An insufferable “A-List” movie star. *(51 lines)*
- SCARECROW (m/f)..... A possessed scarecrow. A cowardly “A-List” movie star. *(55 lines)*
- RIBS (m/f) A skeleton. P.A. to the stars. Everyone’s favorite “grunt.” *(118 lines)*
- FEMUR (m/f)..... A skeleton. P.A. to the stars. Everyone’s favorite “grunt.” *(117 lines)*

ORWELL (m/f).....	Hollywood director of monster movies. A French auteur. <i>(39 lines)</i>
TECH ONE (m/f).....	A goblin named Hollyhock. Tech crew for the film. <i>(14 lines)</i>
TECH TWO (m/f).....	A goblin named Brittlebrick. Tech crew for the film. <i>(14 lines)</i>
TECH THREE (m/f)	A goblin named Gunnysack. Tech crew for the film. <i>(14 lines)</i>
TECH FOUR (m/f)	A goblin named Goblin Greg. Tech crew for the film. <i>(14 lines)</i>
FRANKIE (m/f)	Frankenstein Ninety-Nine. A bright-eyed optimist who wants to be a star. <i>(207 lines)</i>
COB (m/f).....	A ghoul. Costumer for the film. A sarcastic realist. <i>(111 lines)</i>
THE SHADE (m/f)	The masked specter that hunts the monsters. <i>(24 lines)</i>
WOLF (m/f).....	Burned out former “Tween Wolf.” Historian for Chateau Black. <i>(147 lines)</i>
BLUE (m/f).....	A sea creature from a different lagoon. Custodian for Chateau Black. <i>(77 lines)</i>
CALLAWAY (m/f).....	Legendary actor Salem Callaway. On set to play Van Helsing. <i>(32 lines)</i>
SPIDER (f).....	A mysterious monster with an integral role in everyone’s past. Appears in a flashback. <i>(22 lines)</i>
TWEEN WOLF (m/f)	Wolf as a cub. Appears in a flashback. <i>(10 lines)</i>
INVISIBLE MAN (m/f).....	<i>(1 line)</i>

EXTRAS:

GOBLIN TECHS (m/f).....Optional additional goblin techs, any number.

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

- SPIDER and TWEEN WOLF may double as TECHS.
- TECH THREE and FOUR lines may be given to TECHS ONE and TWO.
- SHADE may double as ORWELL.
- THE INVISIBLE MAN has a single line after the curtain call that can be given to a TECH or a member of the ensemble.

SET

A simple unit set consisting of a platform and two staircases. An arch or arches could be included underneath the platform, otherwise it is a flat stone wall, decorated as a castle. If possible, provide for two actors to fall off the back of the platform (this part of the show can be handled differently if necessary). Additional set pieces: OMNIA MONSTRA MORI removable sign, large cloth x2, WOLF's desk, a coffin, a portrait of SPIDER, a pedestal for Blacksword.

COSTUMES & MAKEUP

The various movie monsters can appear as close to the original movie versions as possible, while the other characters can appear creatively. Goblins should not appear gruesome, but mischievous. Suggestions of monster personas meant to preserve actor performances instead of photorealistic makeup is an acceptable approach. FRANKIE should be distinct from the other monsters, in how “human” she appears.

LIGHTING EFFECTS

Thunder and lightning, fog and dramatic lighting during “takes” and more mundane lighting to contrast those moments. Red lights can help accentuate the drama of the SHADE.

SOUND EFFECTS

- up tempo music for chase scene
- magical sound effects for the Blacksword
- electrical feedback

PROPS

- the Blacksword (Many training swords come in black)
- a boom mic (A paint roller and cord can be effectively used for this)
- other miscellaneous movie equipment
- various “artifacts” that appear as part of the Chateau Black collection
- various movie props that appear as part of BLUE’s personal collection
- the “Adam Sandler” baseball bat
- knives, pistols, kickball, socks, etc. (in Act Two, Scene 2)
- books
- multicolor notecards
- binder or clipboard (Call sheet)
- radios and a voice recorder
- portrait of SPIDER
- various masks

DO NOT COPY

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

MOVIE MONSTERS premiered at Grafton High School in Grafton, WI.
The production included the following cast:

DRACULA	Charlie Danielson
FRANKENSTEIN	Giorgio Fuentes
SCARECROW.....	Katherine Moldenhauer
CREATURE	Cora Kempfer
ORWELL.....	Patrick Wilkins
FEMUR.....	Rachel Lopera
RIBS.....	Jacob Dempsey
FRANKIE	Maya Luening
TECH ONE (HOLLYHOCK).....	Wyatt Belew
TECH TWO (BRITTLEBRICK)	Adrian Wall
TECH THREE (GUNNYSACK).....	Charlotte Barnett
TECH FOUR (GOBLIN GREG) & THE INVISIBLE MAN	Shaunak Chaudhuri
COB	Anna Krol
THE SHADE	Nich Laliberte
WOLF	Ryden Luedtke
BLUE.....	Pyper Flaig
CALLAWAY.....	Francesco Grasso
SPIDER	Magg Barnett
TWEEN WOLF	Alexa Gengler
TECHS (GOBLINS): Becca Bosmans, Sophia Heil, Beaux Jung, Shea McGinley, Kate Murray, Lola TerraNova, Shea Tonn, Paisley Williams, Michelle Kraus	

DEDICATION

Thank you to my family at home and my family in GHS Performing Arts, without whom none of my shows would have been possible. Thank you to Adam, who (as always) has provided invaluable insights during the writing of this show.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT START: Interior, the main hall of "Chateau Black." A classic "monster movie" castle: misty, melancholy, and cold. DRACULA is CS, imposing and sinister in traditional vampire garb complete with a distinctive cape. He has just claimed a victim. Enter FRANKENSTEIN, the original Frankenstein's monster, with crisscrossing scars and wearing a torn Victorian shirt. The dialogue in this first section can be a little stilted, or a touch over-dramatic.

FRANKENSTEIN: Dracula, Lord of Darkness. I wasn't sure you would come.

DRACULA: Frankenstein, the monster made from a thousand pieces. I was curious, nothing more. Asking me to meet you in Chateau Black, of all places? What an odd request.

FRANKENSTEIN: Desperate times. I'll get straight to the point: I need your help.

DRACULA: My help? No, Frankenstein. You ought to know by now... I work alone.

Enter CREATURE and SCARECROW, from opposite sides. CREATURE is a scaly sea monster from a certain lagoon. SCARECROW, a fiend in a "Freddy Krueger-esque" striped shirt, wears distinctive gloves and carries a sickle. Both speak in sinister, inhuman tones.

SCARECROW: Not this time, Dracula.

CREATURE: This time, you need us as much as we need you.

DRACULA: Creature? Scarecrow? You called them too?

FRANKENSTEIN: As I said. Desperate times.

DRACULA: Perhaps for you. I don't need any of you to survive. Whatever scheme you have planned for this haunted mansion, you can count me out.

SCARECROW: Don't be coy, vampire. You know exactly why Frankenstein has called us here.

CREATURE: You know who waits for us in Chateau Black.

SCARECROW: Say his name, Dracula. Say it!

DRACULA: *(With dread.)* Van Helsing.

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes, the masked assassin known as Van Helsing.
Bane of all monsters.

DRACULA: No! You're lying! He can't be back!

FRANKENSTEIN: Then explain this.

FRANKENSTEIN dramatically unveils an upright black sword, lodged in a pedestal at CS. All the monsters recoil instinctively. DRACULA hisses.

DRACULA: The Blacksword!

CREATURE: Stay back! Legend says the Blacksword can kill a monster with a single touch!

SCARECROW: It's no legend. That cursed blade has killed hundreds of monsters!

DRACULA: Frankenstein! Where did you find this abomination?

FRANKENSTEIN: It was pulled from the chest of his latest victim. See the blood?

DRACULA: No!

FRANKENSTEIN: Exactly. My fellow monsters, it pains me to reveal that the Blacksword has claimed the life of... the Invisible Man! (*Beat.*) I think. It's sort of hard to tell.

CREATURE: No! Not the Invisible Man, maybe!

SCARECROW: Oh, the inhumanity, probably!

FRANKENSTEIN: Hold, fiends. The time to mourn our friend, possibly, will come later.

CREATURE: Frankenstein is right. There is but one reason Van Helsing would leave this accursed sword for us to find.

SCARECROW: To send a message.

FRANKENSTEIN: Exactly. This sword is meant to intimidate us. But we will not yield. I've called you here, to Chateau Black, so we can settle the score with Van Helsing once and for all.

CREATURE: Yes! We will band together and slay him in his own stronghold!

SCARECROW: Let this house of horrors serve as his grave!

FRANKENSTEIN: What do you say, Dracula?

DRACULA: Hmm. What do I say?

FRANKENSTEIN: (*Seemingly confused.*) Yes... What do you say?

DRACULA: What do I say? What do I, Dracula, say?

FRANKENSTEIN: *(A little impatient.)* Yes, Dracula. What do you say?

DRACULA: Yes, that is the question. *(Thoughtful.)* What do I say...

What... Do I say... What do I say... *(Clearing his throat, looking offstage.)* Line?

FRANKENSTEIN: Oh, come on.

ORWELL: *(From offstage.)* CUT!

A bell rings, the lights shift to neutral, and the commotion of a movie studio commences. Enter ORWELL, the film's director, in pretentious garb and carrying a voice recorder, from SR. ORWELL speaks with a French accent. At the same moment, FRANKIE, holding a boom, and the TECHS, who are goblins, enter from USL and USR. FRANKIE stands out as exceptionally "human" looking: green eyeshadow and green highlights in her hair are the only things to hint at her monsterdom, otherwise she is dressed casually. The monsters now speak more normally.

DRACULA: Sorry, Orwell. I was planking.

SCARECROW: You say, "the hunter is now the hunted." It's not that hard!

ORWELL: Hmm. Something in this scene is not working.

CREATURE: Besides Dracula's brain?

DRACULA: Back off, Creature.

ORWELL: *(Into the recorder.)* Note: more light on the Blacksword. *(To the cast.)* We're going again. Everyone back to one. Allons-y!

The A-Listers groan in unison. They are clearly getting tired.

SCARECROW: Where are the P.A.s? I'm starving. Ribs, get over here!

CREATURE: Femur, bring the atomizer; these lights are drying me out.

FEMUR, a skeleton, enters with an atomizer and a distinctive scarf. CREATURE dons the scarf and adopts the air of an auteur as FEMUR begins spritzing; meanwhile, RIBS, another skeleton, enters with a tray of food. The skeletons scamper around as henchmen or "grunts."

FEMUR: Here you are, ma'am!

RIBS: Craft services!

SCARECROW: Thank you, Ribs. (*Pointedly.*) At least someone is acting like a professional.

DRACULA: Oh, stuff it, Scarecrow.

CREATURE: You know, this reminds me of a conversation I had with Sir Ian McKellen at the Academy Awards...

Another collective groan.

SCARECROW: We get it, Creature. You won an Oscar. Maybe we could go fifteen minutes without talking about it.

CREATURE: (*Examining his nails.*) Maybe if you did anything besides paint-by-number horror movies, you'd have more on your shelf than a Teen Choice Award.

SCARECROW: Hey! I'm proud of that award! Those teens are surprisingly harsh critics.

DRACULA: Ribs! If I don't have a latte in under ten seconds, someone's neck is getting bitten.

RIBS: Blood-latte, coming up!

ORWELL: Note: something is off with the composition. Frankie, how was the sound?

FRANKIE: (*Eager.*) Sounded good to me. Nice take, everyone! Uh, hey, Frank! Listen, about what we we're talking about earlier...

FRANKENSTEIN: (*Dismissive.*) Out of the way, Frankie. Orwell, I've got a tear in my shirt.

SCARECROW: You're supposed to.

FRANKENSTEIN: No. A tear where I'm not supposed to.

ORWELL: (*Speaking into a walkie-talkie.*) Costumes! S'il te plaît!

Enter COB, holding her own walkie-talkie and wheeling in a costume rack and/or mannequin. COB is a ghoul with dark clothing, black hair, and sunken eyes.

COB: Yeah, boss.

ORWELL: Frankenstein has a tear.

COB: He's supposed to.

FRANKENSTEIN: A tear where I'm not supposed to have a tear.

COB: Fine, I'll take care of it. Orwell, you need to make a decision about these Van Helsing masks. Hey, Frankie.

FRANKIE: Hi, Cob. So, Frank, listen—

COB: Where's the tear?

FRANKENSTEIN: There.

COB: Where?

FRANKENSTEIN: There!

CREATURE: Femur, a little more on my right side!

ORWELL: (*Examining the mask.*) Hmm... I don't know. Our producer called earlier, and they have reservations about covering such a famous face.

SCARECROW: (*Nodding at FRANKENSTEIN.*) The mystery producer strikes again.

ORWELL: I beg your pardon?

SCARECROW: This producer of yours has a lot of opinions for someone we've never met.

FRANKENSTEIN: Does this shadow investor have a name, at least?

ORWELL: (*Still examining the masks.*) This is not your concern.

CREATURE: Eh. Just be thankful for the money. The film would not have happened without it.

SCARECROW: (*Suddenly irate.*) Watch it, Femur! You're getting my hay all wet!

FEMUR: Sorry, Scarecrow!

COB: Orwell. Van Helsing famously wore a mask. There's no getting around it.

ORWELL: Oui, oui... Any of these masks are fine. You pick one, eh? Merci beaucoup.

DRACULA: (*Wincing.*) Ugh! Ribs! What blood type is this?

RIBS: (*Dipping a finger in the cup, then tasting it, then spitting it out.*) AB positive.

DRACULA: I ordered AB negative, bonehead! Negative!

SCARECROW: Quit harping on the skeletons, Dracula, it's bumming me out.

DRACULA: Mind your own business. I'll treat my underlings however I want.

SCARECROW: They're not underlings; they're Union.

DRACULA: Bah! Unions. I brought the skeletons to life myself. That makes them my grunts. So watch your step, Ribs, or I'll curse you back into a pile of bones!

RIBS: Ach!

CREATURE: Stop it, all of you. You're being boring. If I could pass on a little wisdom I received from the late, great, Katharine Hepburn...

SCARECROW: Keep up that spritzing and you can have another talk with her right now.

CREATURE: Go stand in a field, Scarecrow!

SCARECROW: Go drown in a bog, Creature!

A verbal scrum ensues, where the four A-Listers are getting in each others' faces.

ORWELL: Arrêt! Arrêt, tout de suite! Monsters, please! Have you forgotten why you are here? Have you forgotten what we are trying to achieve? This is the biggest film any of you have ever made, depicting the greatest achievement any of you have ever accomplished! You stand here in Chateau Black, the place where you saved all of monsterkind, and this is how you behave?

SCARECROW: Creature started it.

ORWELL: (*Frustrated.*) Ach! Monsters! (*Sigh.*) I think we are all getting a little tired. We will call it there for the morning. Goblins—s'il vous plaît!

TECH THREE: Alright, that's lunch everyone!

An alarm rings, and the A-Listers groan and start for the wings, mumbling.

TECH FOUR: Remember, it's left, left, then right to get back to your dressing rooms. Chateau Black is magically confusing, so do not take a wrong turn anywhere.

ORWELL: Ach! Attendez! Un instant! Frankenstein, remind them about this afternoon!

FRANKENSTEIN: Ah, yes. This afternoon, we are filming the final battle with Van Helsing. That means Salem Callaway will be on set! So come back ready to give your A-game!

Everyone applauds, then excitedly exits for lunch discussing CALLAWAY. RIBS, FEMUR, COB and TECHS start various chores about set. FRANKIE tries to catch FRANKENSTEIN.

RIBS: Frankie! Can you believe Salem Callaway's going to be here?
Salem Callaway!

FEMUR: Our greatest living actor! What a day!

FRANKIE: Yup! Going to be great. Excuse me.

COB: Where are you going?

FRANKIE: Oh, just to talk to Big Frank for a second.

COB: (*Knowingly.*) Mmm-hmm. About what?

FRANKIE: Oh, nothing special.

COB: Give me the notecards, Frankie.

FRANKIE reluctantly hands over a stack of multicolor notecards. COB uses them to scoldfully smack FRANKIE'S forehead, punctuating the following line with three hits.

COB: No. More. Speeches.

FRANKIE: Right. Yes. Totally with you. Hey, Frank! Wait up!

COB: Frankie! Oh, brother.

FRANKIE catches FRANKENSTEIN USL.

FRANKIE: Hey, Frank. Great scene.

FRANKENSTEIN: Thanks. Listen, I'm going to lunch. Can we do your speech later?

FRANKIE: What speech?

FRANKENSTEIN: Come on, Frankie. Give me a break. Where are the notecards?

FRANKIE: Cob took them.

FRANKENSTEIN: Then what do you have behind your back?

FRANKIE: (*Sheepishly.*) Back up notecards.

FRANKENSTEIN: Good lord.

FRANKIE: (*Reading off the cards.*) Good afternoon.

FRANKENSTEIN: It's morning.

FRANKIE: My name is Frankenstein Ninety-Nine, the ninety-ninth Frankenstein. You may call me Frankie.

FRANKENSTEIN: Why are you introducing yourself? I've known you your entire life.

FRANKIE: In the following presentation, I will lay out the ten reasons why you should give me a speaking role in your blockbuster film: "insert film name here." Oh. Wait. Give me a second.

FRANKENSTEIN: Frankie.

FRANKIE: Do you have a pen?

FRANKENSTEIN: Frankie. Stop. Every new production is the same song and dance. Put me in, coach! I'm ready for the big time! I wanna see my name up in lights!

FRANKIE: If you'd just hear me out—

FRANKENSTEIN: Frankie, I want you to listen to me very closely. You're a good monster. You have a big heart and a brain that can take you somewhere. I should know; I was there when the old man picked them out.

FRANKIE: So give me a chance!

FRANKENSTEIN: Let me finish. You're a good monster, but you're not a movie monster.

FRANKIE: (*Defensively.*) What are you talking about?

FRANKENSTEIN: (*Reluctant sigh.*) Do I really have to say it? You're the ninety-ninth Frankenstein. The old man was getting pretty good by the end.

FRANKIE: So?

FRANKENSTEIN: So you don't have any scars! The old man stitched you up so well you can hardly tell you're a Frankenstein at all.

FRANKIE: That's not my fault! (*Insistent.*) I don't need scars to be scary!

FRANKENSTEIN: I don't want to hash this out again. (*Checking his watch.*) I need to eat before Salem Callaway gets here. I'm sorry, but you know I'm right.

Exit FRANKENSTEIN and ALL TECHS. FEMUR and RIBS converge on FRANKIE with sympathy.

FEMUR: You okay?

FRANKIE: Yeah. No. I don't know.

RIBS: Don't worry, Frankie. You're just as much of a monster as the rest of us.

FEMUR: Yeah! Don't listen to Frankenstein.

FRANKIE: But he's right! I'm no movie monster. I'm just a stupid miracle of modern science.

COB: Come on, Frankie. It's not that bad.

FRANKIE: Yes, it is. Look at me! (*Tearing up.*) I'm beautiful!

COB: Hold on—let's hit the pause button on all this positive self-talk, okay?

RIBS: Yeah! It's like I always say—you're just as the good lord made you.

FRANKIE: (*Annoyed.*) I'm specifically not.

RIBS: Oh, right. Frankenstein.

COB: You're going to be okay, Frankie. You don't want their life anyway.

FRANKIE: Of course not. Who would want to star in a blockbuster film depicting their victory over monsterkind's greatest enemy? I'd much rather be a talentless nobody.

FEMUR: Don't knock it 'til you try it!

COB: You know, Frankenstein has a point. Every production is the same. As soon as the big lights switch on, you turn into "Famous Frankie," the starry-eyed go-getter with a pocket full of dreams, and we don't see "Fun Frankie" until the film gets shipped off to editing.

FRANKIE: Dracula. Frankenstein. The Invisible Man, maybe. We work in the shadow of the literal A-List of movie monsters, and you can't understand how I might have dreams?

COB: Don't look at me; I'm just a ghoul with a costume cart. (*Indicating the skeletons.*) Those two are losers; maybe they understand.

RIBS: Eh. Not really.

FEMUR: Yeah, we're pretty content as grunts. There's less pressure.

FRANKIE: But you must have dreams! Ribs, what were you doing before you were a skeleton?

RIBS: Mmm... I remember doing a lot of screaming on a torture rack. Is that a dream?

FRANKIE: No. How about you, Femur? What did you do?

FEMUR: (*Pondering.*) I want to say... singing?

FRANKIE: Yes! There you go! Now that's a dream!

FEMUR: No, wait. Not singing. Screaming.

FRANKIE: Oh.

FEMUR: On a torture rack.

FRANKIE: I get it. (*Sigh.*) So, I'm the weird one, is that it? None of you have any ambitions?

RIBS: Well... Now that you mention it, this one time, Femur and I did put together a pitch for a buddy cop movie. (*To COB.*) See, we would be police officers... that were also unlikely friends.

COB: I'm familiar with the genre.

RIBS: And also skeletons.

COB: Yup. Still on board.

FRANKIE: That sounds great! Why didn't you go for it?

FEMUR: (*Obviously.*) Because we're grunts! No one wants a movie about grunts.

FRANKIE: I just keep thinking—I'm the ninety-ninth Frankenstein. That means ninety-eight of us are living in obscurity while Big Frank gets all the fame. How is that fair?

RIBS: Hey, what line of work are all those other Frankensteins in?

FRANKIE: Mostly advertising.

RIBS: Huh.

COB: You're not listening. Their world may look dazzling, but it's all just smoke and mirrors.

RIBS: Literally. (*Pointing.*) Smoke machine there, and there; mirrors there, there and there.

COB: None of it is real. None of it means anything. The boneheads are right—you have a good life. And more importantly: you're a good monster.

FRANKIE: It's funny. My whole life people have told me I'm a good monster.

COB: So?

FRANKIE: So I don't want to be good. I want to be great.

TECH ONE: (*Shouts from offstage.*) Coming through!

ALL TECHS re-enter.

FRANKIE: (*Sigh.*) What does it matter? I've never done anything in my life to earn the spotlight. Might as well get back to being a grunt. Hey Ribs, what grunt title did they give me this film?

RIBS: (*Checking the clipboard.*) The call sheet lists you as "Key Grip."

FRANKIE: See? I don't even know what a "Key Grip" is.

FEMUR: I don't think anyone knows.

TECH ONE: Hey! I don't think I like what I'm hearing! I, for one, take pride in my work.

TECH TWO: That's right! All this grousing is most unprofessional.

COB: Unprofessional? That's rich, coming from a bunch of goblin lighting techs.

TECH THREE: What's wrong with a goblin lighting tech?

FRANKIE: Goblins are afraid of light. You're the least professional lighting techs in the world!

TECH TWO: What? No we're not!

TECH FOUR: That is an old wives' tale. I have half a mind to—

FRANKIE: (*Shouting.*) Lights!

SFX: Industrial lights clicking on. Lights get brighter.

TECH THREE: Scatter!

The TECHS hiss and scamper offstage.

COB: Classic.

FRANKIE: That was the first trick Big Frank taught me about working on monster movies.

RIBS: I suppose that's lunch. You coming, Frankie?

FRANKIE: Yeah, right behind you. (*Begins to cross but lingers at the Blackword pedestal.*) Wait, hang on a second—aren't we supposed to move this Blackword prop for the next scene?

FRANKIE grips the handle of the sword. SFX: Lights flicker erratically, accompanied by the sound of sparks, electric shocks, or other violent magical feedback. FRANKIE cries out in pain. COB, seeing FRANKIE is in danger, darts over and pulls her off of it. The magic ceases.

RIBS: (*Oblivious, reading the clipboard.*) Mmm... No. We are not supposed to move the sword.

COB: Frankie! Frankie, are you okay?

FRANKIE: Ow.

FEMUR: What was that?

FRANKIE: I don't know... I just touched the handle, and... What kind of a prop sword is this?

FEMUR: I'll find out. Hey Ribs, who's the prop master on this stupid movie?

RIBS: (*Checking the clipboard.*) You are.

FEMUR: Oh, yeah. Well, in that case, it appears to be some sort of sword.

COB: Why did it shock her like that?

FEMUR: I'll find out. Hey, Ribs, who's the master electrician on this stupid movie?

RIBS: You again.

FEMUR: Oh, yeah. Well, in that case—

FRANKIE: It's fine, Femur. I think I'm okay. That wasn't even half as much as the shock that brought me to life.

RIBS: Oh, right. Frankenstein.

COB: (*Examining the sword.*) Uh... Hey, everyone? I think we have a problem here.

RIBS: Yeah, the problem is Femur doesn't unplug the props when he's supposed to.

COB: This isn't Femur. It isn't any of us... I think... I think we're in trouble.

FEMUR: No kidding. I'm about to report all of this to my Union Rep. Hey, Ribs, who—

RIBS: You are!

COB: It's not a prop.

FRANKIE: Excuse me?

COB: This is not a prop. This is the actual Blacksword.

COB stands. ALL exchange dubious looks and take a hesitant half-step back.

FRANKIE: Cob. Be serious. The real Blacksword was lost when the A-List defeated Van Helsing. Everyone knows that.

COB: See the filigree on the edges? Those are curse marks. Hey Ribs, do our prop swords have curses on them?

RIBS: Mmm, no. The studio's insurance covers hexes, hocus pocus, and higgledy-piggledy, but specifically disallows curses.

COB: That's what I thought. Those are curse marks. So this... This is the Blacksword.

FRANKIE, COB, RIBS, and FEMUR look at one another for a moment, and in unison, take a step back.

FRANKIE: Okay. So, that's the actual Blacksword. The monster-killing sword of Van Helsing.

COB: Seems like it, yes.

FRANKIE: Cool, cool... How did the Blacksword wind up in the middle of our film set?

COB: That is an excellent question.

RIBS: Well, this was Van Helsing's home. Maybe someone found it and put it here by mistake.

FEMUR: I guess that's possible, except for the fact that it is absolutely not possible. None of us can touch that thing.

RIBS: Oh, yeah. I forgot about that. So then... I guess a human must have put it there.

Everyone exchanges their most worried look yet, and in unison, takes their largest step back.

FRANKIE: A human? Do we even know any humans?

RIBS: Well, I know Willam DaFoe, and Femur knows Jeff Goldblum.

COB: *(Thoughtfully.)* So... No.

RIBS: Yeah, no.

FEMUR: Dang. It's lucky that Frankie discovered this when she did, isn't it? If one of the A-Listers had touched it... That could have been bad.

FRANKIE: I wonder if... I wonder if that was the point?

FEMUR: Murder? No, come on.

RIBS: Hey... Look here! There's something tied to the end of the sword. Some sort of string.

COB: Be careful!

RIBS: It's attached to the canvas on the backdrop. I wonder...

RIBS follows the string to where it is attached to a cloth that covers the back wall, then pulls it down. With hum and a flicker of lights, ominous graffiti is revealed. The wall reads: OMNIA MONSTRA MORI. All gasp in unison.

FRANKIE: "OMNIA MONSTRA MORI." My god. I can't... *(Beat.)* Read that.

RIBS: Me either. What is that, Latin?

COB: *(Frightened.)* Where's my radio? I'm calling Orwell.

FRANKIE: This doesn't make any sense.

RIBS: That's Latin for you. There's a reason it's a dead language.

FRANKIE: No... This is a closed set. How did someone do all this without anyone noticing?

FEMUR: Forget how; why would someone do this?

COB: To frighten us. OMNIA MONSTRA MORI is Latin for "kill all monsters."

RIBS: Oh. Well that's cheerful.

COB: Don't you get it? "OMNIA MONSTRA MORI" was the battle cry of Van Helsing!

RIBS: Oh. *(Realizing the implications.)* Oh. But Van Helsing is Dead! ...Right?

FEMUR: Of course he is... Right?

COB: Look. I just paged Orwell. He can sort this out.

FEMUR: What do you suppose he'll do?

COB: If it were up to me, I would pause the production. Maybe even cancel the film altogether.

FRANKIE: What? This is a billion-dollar project. He can't just cancel it!

COB: Better to lose money than lose our lives. Orwell—come in—Hey! *(FRANKIE snatches the radio.)* Give that back! We need to tell Orwell about the sword!

FRANKIE: Yes! You're right. Alternatively... What if we didn't?

COB: What?

FRANKIE: What if we didn't tell Orwell, and we just took care of it instead? Hands in!

FEMUR: *(After a beat.)* No? No, right? That's a bad idea?

COB: Yes, that's a bad idea!

RIBS: Yeah... I'm not sure, Frankie. This all seems above our paygrade. (*Checking clipboard.*) Literally. I'm not sure we can get overtime for something like this. Hang on.

COB: Frankie, we are not handling this ourselves!

FRANKIE: You say that now. But hold on! (*Pulling out more notecards.*) Ahem. Hello, my name is Frankenstein Ninety-Nine—

COB: (*Snatching the notecards.*) Frankie, this is not your big break! We need to call this in!

RIBS: Well, what do you know! Sleuthing and/or other vigilante crime fighting is approved overtime paid at time-and-a-half. (*Looking up.*) What are we talking about?

FRANKIE: (*Snatching the notecards.*) We're talking about how we can do this!

COB: (*Snatching them right back.*) No, we're talking about calling Orwell and the A-Listers!

FRANKIE: (*Snatching the notecards.*) Why? What are the A-Listers going to do that we can't?

COB: (*Snatching them back.*) Solve the problem. It's what they do. It's why they're famous!

RIBS: Yeah, I'm with Cob on this one.

FEMUR: Me, too. Why do something so foolish?

COB: Why do something so dangerous?

FRANKIE: Because I'm not a grunt! Do you hear me? I am not a grunt. (*FRANKIE grabs her notecards back, considers them for a moment, then pockets them.*) Look, I get it, okay? I know I can't keep up with Frank and the others. They're the A-Listers, and I'm just... me. But I also know that I can be more than what the old man made me to be. Femur. Ribs. You can be more than what Dracula made you to be. And Cob, you can be more than—I don't know—what some old swamp witch made you to be? I'm not sure how ghouls are made.

COB: I had a mother.

FRANKIE: Really? Weird. Anyway—someone out there is threatening us with the Blacksword. That means the A-Listers are in just as much danger as we are. Maybe they could save us. But maybe we could save us, too.

Everyone takes a moment to consider this.

RIBS: I suppose the A-Listers have been more up their own tailbones than usual lately.

FEMUR: That's true. Who knows if they'd even take this seriously. Maybe we would be better for this job. *(Suddenly enthusiastic.)*
Ribs! We can be detectives! Like in our script!

RIBS: Quick! Try some of that buddy cop banter!

FEMUR: *(In character.)* You're a loose cannon, rookie! We've gotta do this by the book.

RIBS: *(In character.)* You may not like my methods, old man, but I get results!

FEMUR: Nice. Okay, Frankie. We're in.

COB has stepped away from the group, looking pensive. FRANKIE approaches cautiously.

FRANKIE: Cob. You're my oldest friend.

COB: It just seems so dangerous, Frankie. I'm not sure.

FRANKIE: Well, I am. *(With pride.)* I'm a Frankenstein, made from a thousand pieces. And my heart is telling me this is the right thing to do.

COB: *(A sigh.)* Frankie's heart. Frankie's big dumb heart. *(Smiling.)*
Don't know why the old man gave you that thing. It only ever gets you into trouble.

FRANKIE: Does that mean you'll help?

COB: *(Reluctantly.)* Yeah, I'll help. But as soon as we have something, we turn it over to Frank and the others. Deal?

FRANKIE: *(Enthusiastic.)* Deal! Well, alright then! It's decided: we find the saboteur ourselves. Now, where to start. Hmm... Ah! Does anyone know anything about basic detective work?

COB: *(A headache already.)* Yeah, that sounds about right.

FEMUR takes a bold step forward and puts on a pair of dark sunglasses.

FEMUR: We start with finding a perp. We're looking for means, motive, and opportunity.

RIBS: (*Putting on sunglasses too.*) Officer Frankie was right: no way some johnny-off-the-street got past our security. This had to be an inside job.

FEMUR: (*Removes sunglasses.*) Looks like this call sheet... just became our suspect list.

RIBS: What's the matter, Sarge? You look confused.

COB: No, it's just... That was weirdly competent.

RIBS: Next up is motive. What do you think, Sarge?

COB: (*Even more of a headache.*) Well... We're in Van Helsing's house. We found Van Helsing's magic sword next to Van Helsing's catchphrase. That has to mean something.

FEMUR: (*Putting on sunglasses.*) What are you saying, Sarge? Are we looking at a copycat?

RIBS: (*Dramatically taking off sunglasses.*) Or a fanatic.

FRANKIE: (*Thoughtfully.*) Trouble is, I don't know a lot about Van Helsing.

COB: He was a masked monster hunter. There's not much to know.

FRANKIE: We're literally filming a movie about him! Someone around here has to know something. (*Sudden inspiration.*) Hang on a minute... Ribs, give me the call sheet.

RIBS: (*Taking off sunglasses.*) Don't you mean the suspect list?

FRANKIE: Just give it, would ya?

COB: Hand over the sunglasses, too. You've lost sunglasses privileges.

RIBS: Aw, man.

COB: What are you looking for?

FRANKIE: I've worked on a dozen of Big Frank's movies. He's stuck me in just about every grunty department there is. I know them all. This film is a historical drama, right? That means there's a research team. (*Excitedly.*) Here! Look—a historical consultant and a location scout!

COB: (*Taking the clipboard.*) Talk about the bottom of the barrel. Historical consultant, H.R. Wolfington. H.R. Wolfington. Does that name sound familiar to you?

FRANKIE: Who cares! The point is they'll probably know all about Van Helsing.

FEMUR: (*Putting on sunglasses.*) But they could be in on the take! You start spreading around what we know and you could blow the whole operation! (*Beat.*) Sunglasses?

COB: (*Snatching sunglasses.*) Sunglasses.

RIBS: Well, I like it! When the trail runs cold, call in the nerds.

FEMUR: Only... The cast is going to come back this afternoon. Aren't they going to want to know about the ouchie death sword and the hateful graffiti?

COB: (*Thoughtfully.*) We need to split up. Ribs, you stay here and help me cover up this wall.

RIBS: What about the sword?

COB: Well... We can't touch it, which means we can't move it. So our best bet is to try to keep the A-Listers from touching it either.

FEMUR: I guess that means Frankie and I go find out more about Van Helsing.

COB: C'mon, Ribs. Grab the canvas and we'll throw it on from the other side.

FRANKIE: Cob... Thank you.

COB: (*A sigh.*) Be careful. If you run into trouble, just listen to that big dumb heart.

Exit COB and FEMUR. FRANKIE pauses, looking at the Blacksword.

FEMUR: Alright! Time to find some nerds. Frankie? What's up?

FRANKIE: The Blacksword kills monsters that touch it. Right?

FEMUR: Oh, yeah. Always.

FRANKIE: Then why didn't it kill me?

FEMUR: Hmm. I don't know. (*Conciliatory.*) Hey, don't give up hope! Maybe it'll kill you later!

FRANKIE: Yeah... Alright.

FEMUR: (*An afterthought.*) Oh! I just thought of something... There is a human on set!

FRANKIE: You mean Salem Callaway? He's not getting here until this afternoon.

FEMUR: No. Not Callaway. (*Cheerfully.*) Orwell.

FEMUR seems oblivious to what is being suggested with this observation, but *FRANKIE* is momentarily perturbed. Lights fade out on an empty stage. Before they completely extinguish, there is a flicker, and lights come back in red tones to create a menacing tableau.

Enter the *SHADE*, a hooded figure. Careful to keep their face concealed, they approach the costume rack and take one of the Van Helsing masks. They then approach the sword, observing it with reverence. After a beat, they swiftly draw it from its base and hold it aloft.

SFX: Magical feedback, lights flash erratically. Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: Interior. The Library of Chateau Black. There is a small desk *USL*, where *WOLF* is sitting with a stack of books. *WOLF* is a middle-aged werewolf. He wears a sweater, perhaps, with khaki pants and prominent spectacles. Behind him, a portrait is hung, concealed with a cloth. *BLUE*, a sea monster along the lines of *Creature*, enters chasing the *TECHS*, who are hauling off various relics.

BLUE: Hey! Careful with that!

TECH ONE: (Vaguely interested.) Why? Is it important?

BLUE: Of course it's important! Everything in here is important! The Van Helsing family has the largest collection of historical artifacts ever assembled.

TECH ONE: Neat. So, what is it?

BLUE: What is it? I'll tell you what it is. (Ahem.) Wolf, tell them what it is.

WOLF: (Peering over his glasses.) That is an urn. It has been in the Van Helsing family archives since the death of Archduke Leopold Van Helsing.

TECH FOUR: Well, whatever it is, it's filthy. What's all this dust on the inside?

WOLF: The Archduke Leopold Van Helsing. It's a funerary urn.

TECH ONE: Oh. Well, thanks, hoss. We'll get it back to you at the end of shooting.

BLUE: You have to sign it out! You have to... (*Distracted.*) Hey! What are you taking?

TECH TWO: We needed more books for the explosion scene.

BLUE: The explosion scene? What explosion scene?!

TECH TWO: When they blow up the castle and have to jump out the windows! (*Mimes and mimics an explosion.*) We need book pages for texture, otherwise it's just a big wall of fire.

BLUE: (*Indignant.*) These books are from the Library at Alexandria!

TECH ONE: Wow, really? That's neat. So, I just sign here, then?

BLUE: (*Resigned.*) Yeah, sign here.

TECH THREE: (*Inspecting the covered painting.*) Hey, what's under here?

WOLF, suddenly attentive, stands and calmly moves between TECH THREE and the painting.

WOLF: That's not for you.

TECH THREE: Now, come on, you know the deal. Our producer is funding this historical site for the next decade in exchange for access. That means we use whatever we want for our staging.

WOLF: Yes. Whatever you want. (*Sternly.*) Apart from this.

TECH THREE: Hey... Wait a minute... You look sort of familiar.

WOLF: (*Returning to his reading.*) No, I don't.

TECH FOUR: Actually, I think he looks familiar, too...

TECH TWO: That's right! Aren't you—

BLUE: (*Cutting in.*) Alright, you managed to pilfer more of our priceless artifacts. Now, why don't you all just get out of here.

TECH TWO: (*Defiant.*) I don't think so. I bet there's plenty more for us to "pilfer."

TECH FOUR: That's right! We're here to do a job. And there's nothing you can do to stop us.

BLUE: That would be true, except Wolf here used to work with goblins.

TECH FOUR: What's that supposed to—

WOLF: Lights!

TECH ONE: Scatter!

Lights brighten momentarily, and the goblin TECHS scatter again.

WOLF: You know, that was the first trick I learned on movie sets.

BLUE: Classic. (*Making sure the goblin TECHS are gone.*) I thought they'd never leave. Help me get the real stuff out again, would ya?

WOLF and BLUE go about retrieving and displaying artifacts retrieved from secret places.

WOLF: I have to hand it to you, Blue, decoy artifacts were a stroke of genius. Nice work.

BLUE: I am Chateau Black's custodian. It is my sworn duty to protect this moldy junk. Hey! Not there! I need the shelf space for the good stuff.

WOLF: By "good stuff," do you mean your memorabilia?

BLUE: What else?

WOLF: (*Indignant.*) Chateau Black has the pen that signed the Magna Carta, and you want to display a baseball bat!

BLUE: Yeah. A baseball bat that was signed by the entire cast of Happy Gilmore!

WOLF: Which is a movie about golf. You know, if you're going to collect sports movie memorabilia instead of historical artifacts, the least you could do is buy stuff that makes sense. Was there even a bat in Happy Gilmore?

BLUE: (*Defensively.*) For about three seconds of B-Roll. (*Taking the bat.*) You hush. I can acquire whatever antiquities I want.

WOLF: Oh, sure. Antiquities. Allow me to file away a first edition of the Grimm Fairy Tales behind—(*Holding up a lightbulb.*) A lightbulb from Friday Night Lights.

BLUE: You should be thanking me! If it weren't for me, those goblins would be blowing up your real library. Hey—just out of curiosity, what did you give them as decoy books?

WOLF: As many copies of the Twilight series as I could find at the thrift store.

BLUE: And those ashes in that funerary urn?

WOLF: Burned copies of the Twilight series.

BLUE: (*Chuckling.*) Man, you really hate those books, huh?

WOLF: Blue, I am an expert of arcane literary history. Obviously, I prefer the Vampire Diaries.

BLUE: Of course. Speaking of arcane literary history... Any luck yet?

WOLF: No, nothing. It's uncanny: four hundred years of detailed family history conveniently ends right before our Van Helsing takes the stage.

BLUE: Well the Van Helsing's were pretty secretive.

WOLF: Not like this. It's almost as if someone pruned this family tree on purpose. (*Frustrated.*) Where were the regional records? Maybe I could find something there.

BLUE: They're in the vault. Hey, maybe you should put your painting in there while you're at it. Protect it from those pesky goblins.

WOLF: No... I need it out here. It reminds me why I'm doing this. I'll be right back.

Exit WOLF, SR, while BLUE sets up more memorabilia. Enter FEMUR and FRANKIE, SL.

FEMUR: So, this is the dungeon.

FRANKIE: You mean library.

FEMUR: Eh. Same thing. (*Pointing at BLUE.*) Is that who we're looking for?

FRANKIE: I don't know. (*Loudly.*) Hello?

BLUE, startled, turns around.

BLUE: Oh, hey! Sorry about that. I didn't expect to see any humans around today.

FRANKIE: Excuse me. I am not a human. I'm a Frankenstein, made from a thousand pieces.

BLUE: Really? Huh. It's hard to tell without all the scars.

FRANKIE: (*Reluctantly agreeing.*) Yeah, I know.

FEMUR: Hey, you're a sea monster! You're not related to Creature, are you?

BLUE: We're cousins, actually! He's from the Black Lagoon. I'm from the Blue Lagoon. You can call me Blue.

FEMUR: The Blue Lagoon? That sounds... pleasant.

BLUE: (*Somberly.*) Yeah, I know. Actually, it's a pretty popular vacation spot.

FEMUR: (*Consoling.*) I'm so sorry.

BLUE: It's whatever. Sort of freed me up to do my own thing. That's how I ended up here! So... How can I help you? I thought the production crew had taken everything they needed.

FEMUR: We're not here for artifacts. We're looking for the historical consultant and the location scout.

BLUE: Oh! I think I'm the location scout.

FEMUR: You think?

BLUE: I mean, it's not my day job. Some producer contacted me about filming here because I'm the custodian of Chateau Black.

FRANKIE: Wow! So it was Orwell's mystery producer that landed us in Chateau Black.

FEMUR: Impressive. Hey—did you happen to catch the producer's name?

BLUE: Nah. I stopped asking questions after they promised to fund my collection for the next decade.

FRANKIE: You agreed to let a film crew into Chateau Black without knowing who hired you?

BLUE: Don't look a headless horse in the mouth, I say. Anyway, what can I do for you two?

FEMUR: Right. So, as Chateau Black's custodian, you ought to know all about the Blacksword.

BLUE: Oh, sure. The Blacksword. Yeah, if memory serves, it is a sword... that is black.

FEMUR: That's it? (*Annoyed.*) I'm sorry. How long have you worked here?

BLUE: Oh, years and years. (*Seeing their annoyance.*) Hey, don't look at me! I'm just the custodian. I know where things are; I don't know what they are. You want to know "facts" about "stuff," you talk to the historian.

FRANKIE: And who might that be?

Enter WOLF.

WOLF: Another dead end, Blue. I can't even find a good picture of... (*Looking up.*) Oh. Hello.

FRANKIE and FEMUR turn around to see WOLF. FRANKIE scrutinizes WOLF for a moment, then gasps and covers her mouth with an “Eep!”

FRANKIE: Oh my god it's the Tween Wolf!

WOLF: (*Horrified.*) Oh no. Uh... No, it isn't.

FRANKIE: (*Overly excited.*) Yes-it-is-you're-totally-Tween-Wolf. The actual Tween Wolf is standing right in front of me! Sorry, I'm sort of geeking out right now.

FEMUR: (*Getting a good look now.*) You are the Tween Wolf! You're an A-Lister! What the heck are you doing in a dungeon?

WOLF: (*Grumpy.*) It's a library. And I am not the Tween Wolf.

FRANKIE: I've seen your movies like a hundred times! Here's my definitive rankings from worst to best. Obviously my least favorite is *Tween Wolf: Rise of the Moon*, because it introduced your annoying nephew Scrappy Wolf.

BLUE: Ooo. Yeah, that one was pretty bad.

FRANKIE: My second to least favorite is—

WOLF: Hey! I'm not interested in the Tween Wolf filmography. (*To BLUE.*) You—stop encouraging her. (*Getting in FRANKIE'S face.*) And you! I am not the Tween Wolf. Got it?

FRANKIE turns to FEMUR and points shyly at WOLF. She mouths/whispers the words “TWEEN WOLF.” WOLF grumbles and testily brushes past toward his desk.

FEMUR: Actually, Mr. Tweenie, we came to talk to the film's researcher. I'm Femur, a P.A. on the film. And this is Frankie. Key Grip.

WOLF: (*With a sigh.*) You know, I worked on a dozen movies and I still don't know what that is.

BLUE: I don't think anyone knows.

FEMUR: We were hoping we could ask you a few questions about your research.

WOLF: (*Scoff.*) That's a laugh. Since when does anyone from that film care about my research? I think Orwell made it pretty clear the only thing this movie wants from me is... you know.

FRANKIE: He wants the Tween Wolf to be in the movie! Why didn't I think of that? This is going to be the biggest team-up film of all time; you have to be a part of it!

WOLF: No, no I don't. Not that you asked, but I happen to be doing important work these days. The only reason I took a contract on this stupid film is—(*Spotting FEMUR examining a pile of books on his desk.*) Hey! What are you doing?

FEMUR: (*Reading a title aloud.*) "Van Helsing—The Myth, the Man, the Mask." Hey, Frankie, check it out! All these books have to do with Van Helsing.

WOLF: Put that down!

FEMUR: This is such a coincidence. We're trying to find out more about—(*Suddenly distracted.*) Why does this baseball bat say "Adam Sandler"?

FRANKIE: Hey, could we maybe borrow some of these?

WOLF: Absolutely not! These books are important.

FEMUR: What about the Sandler bat?

BLUE: Even more important!

FEMUR: (*Peeking at the portrait.*) Hey, what's under here? Is this a painting of Van Helsing?

WOLF: (*Suddenly irate.*) I said back off!

WOLF menaces FEMUR and FRANKIE, who recoil. WOLF busies himself replacing the cover onto the portrait, perhaps a little ashamed of his outburst.

BLUE: Woah... Alright, let's take it down a notch. Now, Wolf, you've been complaining for weeks that the film is ignoring your research. Don't you think you should hear them out?

WOLF: No.

FEMUR: Mr. Wolf, if you know about Van Helsing, then we need your help. Something isn't right with this movie.

WOLF: Well, you're right about that. Doesn't mean I'll help you.

BLUE shrugs apologetically as WOLF retakes his seat at his desk. FRANKIE steps forward.

FRANKIE: Leave it to me, Femur. I got this.

FEMUR: (*Wary.*) Oh, boy. Do you, though?

FRANKIE: (*Retrieving notecards.*) Ahem. Hello, new friend. My name is Frankenstein Ninety-Nine, the ninety-ninth Frankenstein. Here are the ten reasons why you should help us with [insert predicament here]. Oh. Wait. Sorry. Does anyone have a pen?

WOLF: You're right, Blue. They seem like the answer to our prayers.

BLUE: Oh, come on, they seem alright. (*Indicating FRANKIE.*) That one seems very prepared. Wolf, you have been hitting dead end after dead end. Maybe it's time to widen the net.

WOLF: (*Looking at the portrait, sighing.*) Alright. Look, I'm sorry I lost my temper. It's just that as soon as I get recognized... (*Sadly.*) No one takes your work seriously when they're used to seeing you as a cub on a movie screen.

FRANKIE: Oh... Hey, I didn't mean—

WOLF: But if you want to help—really help—then I shouldn't stand in your way. Alright, let's start at the beginning. You. Skeleton. You called me an A-Lister. What do you mean by that?

FEMUR: I guess... The monsters who defeated Van Helsing: Dracula, Frankenstein, Scarecrow, Creature, the Invisible Man, maybe, and... well... you. After Van Helsing, you parlayed your hero fame into Hollywood careers.

WOLF: Mansions and movie deals. Fast cars and screaming fans. (*Wry.*) Smoke and mirrors.

WOLF pulls the cloth off the back wall, revealing a portrait of SPIDER. She is a woman with long black hair, wearing a white victorian-style shirt and a black cape, overlaid with a lace of spider web, distinctive gloves and a scarf.

FEMUR: Well... I don't think that's Van Helsing.

WOLF: No, it isn't. This is Spider.

FRANKIE: Spider? I've never heard of her.

WOLF: That doesn't surprise me. Not many monsters have these days. But when Van Helsing was around, everyone knew who she was. And what's more, Van Helsing knew who she was too.

BLUE: (*Sagely.*) Rumor has it, Spider was the only monster Van Helsing ever feared.

FEMUR: Why? She doesn't look so scary.

WOLF: You don't need to look scary to be a great monster.

BLUE: (*Dramatically.*) Spider had this invisible silk, see? It was around her everywhere she went. I heard that if she caught you in her webs, you might never get out again.

FEMUR: Woah. Freaky.

WOLF: The webs could do more than just hold you. (*Nostalgic.*) When I was a cub, I ran afoul of some human teenagers. I was in some real trouble, until, out of nowhere, they all started punching themselves instead of me. It was Spider. She was using her strings to move them around like puppets. She saved my life that day.

BLUE begins miming puppeting a marionette. FRANKIE drifts back to the portrait of SPIDER.

FRANKIE: She seems... familiar, somehow. I feel like I've seen this portrait before.

BLUE: Unlikely. This is the only one. Wolf is obsessed with it.

FEMUR: Why?

WOLF: She was my mentor. Before all of this movie stuff. That's not the point. Listen—the A-Listers may be superheroes in their films, but Spider was a superhero for real. She's the one who took down Van Helsing. Not Frankenstein. Not Dracula. Spider. Or, at least, I think she did.

BLUE: Finding out for sure is the focus of Wolf's research. One day he showed up at Chateau Black to use our library, and the rest is history. Literally. It's been a lot of history. Very boring.

FEMUR: Wait... you think Spider took down Van Helsing? I thought you were there!

WOLF: I was just a cub at the time. I was at Chateau Black when it all went down, but... I didn't see what happened. And as for the A-Listers—Well. Let's just say this new film of theirs is not based on a true story.

FRANKIE: (*Bristling.*) What's that supposed to mean?

WOLF: Five monsters walked in to fight Van Helsing. Four monsters came back out.

FEMUR: Well, maybe. It's so hard to tell with that guy.

WOLF: I'm not talking about the Invisible Man! Spider never returned from the fight. And the only thing the A-Listers will say about the matter is that she "disappeared."

BLUE: *(With emphasis, to WOLF.)* Sort of like the Blacksword.

WOLF: *(Frustrated.)* Would you drop it with the Blacksword! They're completely unrelated.

FEMUR: What about the Blacksword?

WOLF: For some reason, Blue thinks the Blacksword is the key to the whole mystery.

BLUE: *(With drama.)* The pieces fit.

WOLF: *(A headache.)* What pieces? There are no pieces.

Beat. FEMUR and FRANKIE exchange a knowing look.

FEMUR: This may seem coincidental, but we may have... found... the Blacksword.

BLUE: Say what now?

WOLF: *(Skeptical.)* The real Blacksword? How can you tell?

FEMUR: Curse marks, I guess? It nearly killed Frankie when she touched it.

BLUE: *(Shocked.)* What? No. What? No... What?

WOLF: That sword has been lost for decades! Where did you find it?

BLUE: Wait, what do you mean nearly killed her?

FEMUR: Someone left it on the set for us to find. *(Pulling out sunglasses, adopting the detective persona.)* We think it might be part of a larger effort to sabotage the film.

BLUE: No, hang on. I'm still on the part where Frankie is still alive.

WOLF: Frankie? *(WOLF scrutinizes FRANKIE.)* Short for Frankenstein?

FRANKIE: *(Defensive.)* Yeah. I'm Frankenstein Ninety-Nine.

WOLF: I see. The old man sure got good by the end. I didn't recognize you without—

FRANKIE: *(Overlapping.)* Without the scars. I get it.

WOLF: Do you get it? Blue's right. That sword is deadly for monsters. Without exception. *(Examining FRANKIE.)* Interesting. Looks like secrets run in the family, Frankenstein.

FRANKIE: Listen, I'm telling you, if we explain what's going on, my brother will help!

WOLF: Whatever the truth about Spider really is, your brother buried it a long time ago.

FRANKIE: You're wrong. Frank wouldn't do that.

BLUE: Hey! Easy, you two. Why don't we just let Frankenstein tell us himself?

WOLF: Fine.

FRANKIE: Fine.

WOLF: Fine. (*Grumbling.*) Come on, Blue. If they did find the Blacksword, we need to get a good look at it before it "disappears" again.

BLUE: Stay close, everyone. The hallways around the library are hexed, so it's easy to get lost. (*As a tour guide.*) Welcome to historic Chateau Black, home to the Van Helsing collection of antiquities. If you direct your attention left, you will see a statue of someone probably important.

WOLF: (*Irkcd.*) That's Sun Tzu. Hold on... Blue! Why is he wearing a "Toon Squad" jersey?

Exit WOLF and BLUE SL. FEMUR goes to FRANKIE, who is contemplating the portrait.

FEMUR: You okay?

FRANKIE: This Spider... Before today, I had never even heard her name... It's like without the A-List treatment, no one remembers her at all. She's invisible.

FEMUR: Not no one. Wolf remembers her! And now, we remember her too! That doesn't sound invisible to me.

FRANKIE: Yeah... I guess you're right. It's funny, I know I've never heard of her, but I swear I've seen this painting before. (*Shaking it off.*) I'm sure it's nothing. Come on.

Exit FEMUR SL. FRANKIE takes one last lingering look at the portrait, then follows.

Enter SHADE, SR. The SHADE, now wearing the Van Helsing mask, also looks at the portrait of Spider, before moving over to the desk. They pick up the book that WOLF had set aside, linger a moment to examine the cover, then swiftly exit USC.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *Interior. Chateau Black parlor. Enter DRACULA and FRANKENSTEIN from SR. Enter CREATURE and SCARECROW from SL. Unlike the top of the show, ORWELL and the TECHS are visible at the wings.*

DRACULA: This is it, everyone: Van Helsing's inner sanctum. Watch your back.

FRANKENSTEIN: Look there! The Blacksword!

SCARECROW: How did he get it in here so quickly?

CREATURE: Curses! Van Helsing is one step ahead of us at every turn!

FRANKENSTEIN: Stay calm, everyone. Take out your weapons and ready yourself for battle.

Enter SALEM CALLAWAY, from USC.

CALLAWAY: *(Supremely dramatic.)* I'm afraid, monsters, that it won't be much of a battle.

ORWELL: And... Cut! Magnifique! What a performance.

Everyone on set begins applauding eagerly for CALLAWAY.

CALLAWAY: Thank you, thank you. You're too kind.

ORWELL: Well, Mr. Callaway, it is such an honor to have you on set. I would be remiss if I did not ask—any words of wisdom for the team?

CALLAWAY: Oh, heavens, no. I would never deign to instruct such a talented group.

ORWELL: Oui. Well in that case, why don't we—

CALLAWAY: *(Cutting in front of ORWELL; grandiose.)* Acting is a process, yes? But it is also—a passion. Emotion. Brilliance. Each of us are stars... Together, we are a constellation.

Everyone applauds again.

ORWELL: Bien dit! Well said, Mr. Callaway. Now, if we could—

CALLAWAY: Is acting difficult sometimes? Yes. But anything in the world worth doing is.

ORWELL: (*Hesitantly.*) Oui. Now then—

CALLAWAY: People often stop me on the street and ask: “Salem Callaway, you have won three Oscars. What is the secret to your success?” And I always tell them the same thing: “Get away from me at once or I’ll have my bodyguard rough you up.”

Everyone applauds a third time.

ORWELL: Très bien. Alright—notes! Dracula, you were a little off your mark. Frankenstein—this time I want you to deliver with more aggression. Invisible Man, if you’re here, you were probably fine. Mr. Callaway, the next take is with a mask on. Cob will assist you.

COB: (*Perking up, suddenly nervous.*) I will?

ORWELL: Oui. Take him to the costume trailer and get him in a mask.

COB: Take him to the costume trailer? Away from the Blacksword?

ORWELL: Oui. That’s a strange way to think about it, but oui.

COB: Right. Can do, boss. (*To CALLAWAY.*) After, you Mr. Callaway.

CALLAWAY exits USC. ORWELL drifts USL. COB grabs RIBS and takes him USR.

COB: (*Hurriedly and hushed.*) It’s up to you, now. We can’t let them kill themselves with the Blacksword, and we don’t want to start a panic with the graffiti. Keep them away from the sword and the wall. Got it?

RIBS: No problem. Just one question: how?

COB: I don’t know! Improve.

RIBS: Improve. Got it. You realize that’s not my strong suit.

COB: Yeah, I heard it while I was saying it. When was the last time you thought for yourself, anyway?

RIBS: I would have to ask Dracula.

COB: Perfect. This is all going great. (*Glancing offstage.*) I have to go. I don’t care how, Ribs, just don’t let them touch the sword!

Exit COB. ORWELL moves CS.

ORWELL: Ribs! I have to take a call with our producer. While I am gone, have the goblins set up for another take.

RIBS: Sure thing, boss.

ORWELL: Merci. I will be back in ten. *(Then, over-the-shoulder, as an afterthought.)* Oh, Ribs. One more thing. I didn't love the placement of the sword. Move it two feet to the left.

RIBS: Move the sword. Can do. *(Beat. Then, realizing.)* Oh! Uh—Orwell, I don't think I can—

ORWELL: Qu'est-ce que tu fous?! Our producer is not patient. Just take care of it!

Exit ORWELL.

RIBS: *(Aside, psyching himself up.)* Right. Okay... Okay... Improvise. *(To everyone.)* Alright, attention everyone. Orwell asked me to get you all set for the next take. Before we do, please allow our crew a moment to move everything on set except for the sword two feet to the right.

Beat. ALL stare at RIBS in confusion.

TECH ONE: What are you talking about?

RIBS: Orwell didn't like the composition for that last shot, so we have to move everything but the sword two feet to the right. So... Let's go!

SCARECROW: I'm not a math guy, but wouldn't it be easier to move the sword to the left?

RIBS: Hmm? Oh. No, unfortunately, that wouldn't work because of... Exposure.

TECH TWO: What?

RIBS: Exposure. And... shutter speed?

TECH FOUR: Mmm-hmm. You know what? I think I'll just move the sword.

RIBS: *(Moving to intercept.)* No! You can't move it, because... The pedestal is hard to move.

TECH TWO: It has wheels, Ribs. I can see them.

RIBS: Yes, but the wheels are welded to the ground.

DRACULA: *(Looking.)* No, they aren't.

RIBS: Oh! Are they not? Someone must have fixed that. But see, we still can't move the sword, because the sword is... Union. On a Union break. Refuses to move, so... Nothing we can do.

CREATURE: If I may... On one of my award-winning forays into high cinema, I often found myself doing my own stunts. I think moving the entire set would be a lark!

RIBS: Yes! Thank you, Creature.

TECH THREE: Fine. We move the set. Hollyhock. Brittlebrick. Help me with this wall.

TECHS move to the covered wall. RIBS, now additionally panicked, moves to intercept.

RIBS: Ah—yes, except we can't touch that wall either, is the thing.

TECH FOUR: (*Frustrated.*) You just said we have to move it!

RIBS: Yes, I did, Goblin Greg, yes I did. But what I meant was, we have to move the whole set two feet to the right... with our eyes closed. Because... lighting.

DRACULA: Can someone please just move the sword? I have a spa appointment this afternoon.

FRANKENSTEIN: I got it. Ribs, move or get knocked over.

RIBS: Yes. I would move, obviously, except that... I am also on a Union break.

FRANKENSTEIN: I'm about to break your union. I'm going to count to three.

RIBS: Okay, let's just take a quick timeout.

FRANKENSTEIN: One... Two...

RIBS: Mr. Frankenstein! If you would just—

FRANKENSTEIN: Three!

RIBS: (*Looking around for options.*) Uh... Uh...

RIBS, with a panicked squeak, throws his arms around FRANKENSTEIN in a desperate hug.

FRANKENSTEIN: (*Confused and angry.*) What's happening? What are you doing?

RIBS: It's called a hug.

FRANKENSTEIN: (*Furious.*) I know what it is! Why are you doing it?

Enter WOLF, followed by BLUE and FEMUR.

WOLF: He's trying to save your life. Or unlife, I suppose, in Dracula's case. Personally, I wouldn't have bothered.

FEMUR: Hey, Ribs. Whatcha doing?

RIBS: Improvising.

FEMUR: Right on.

FRANKENSTEIN breaks free. FRANKENSTEIN and WOLF regard each other cagily.

FRANKENSTEIN: No... It can't be. *(Disbelief.)* Wolfie?

WOLF: Hi, Frank.

FRANKENSTEIN: *(With an amused smirk.)* Look everyone. The Tween Wolf is here.

DRACULA: You're kidding.

SCARECROW: Wolfie? Is that really you?

CREATURE: It is! The Tween Wolf! How delightfully droll. And... *(To BLUE.)* Who are you?

BLUE: You don't recognize me? It's me! Blue!

CREATURE: That means nothing to me.

BLUE: We're first cousins!

CREATURE: That also means nothing.

DRACULA: Wolfie? You look horrible! What happened to you?

WOLF: I grew up, Dracula. It's what happens to those of us affected by the progress of time.

DRACULA: *(Dismissive.)* Sounds exhausting.

FRANKENSTEIN: I was under the impression that you had declined to be in the film.

SCARECROW: Don't tell me you changed your mind. I don't have time for reshoots. My next horror movie begins production in a month.

CREATURE: You could always remix footage from your first six identical films, I'm sure no one would notice.

SCARECROW: My movies make more money in a single weekend than your stupid arthouse films make in their whole run!

CREATURE: Philistine!

SCARECROW: Snob!

WOLF: Hey! Hey! I'm not here for any of that. I'm here for the sword.

All look at the Blacksword; meanwhile, FRANKIE enters, clutching her notecards.

DRACULA: Alright, I give up. Can someone tell me why everyone around here is so focused on a stupid prop sword?

FRANKIE: Because it's not a prop. It's the real Blacksword.

The A-Listers look at FRANKIE for a moment, then begin laughing derisively.

SCARECROW: Oh, man. Is that why Ribs didn't want us touching that sword? Because you told him it's the real Blacksword? Hilarious!

FRANKIE: It's not a joke.

DRACULA: Oh, little Frankenstein... The Blacksword has been lost for decades!

CREATURE: It just appeared in the middle of our movie set? Abracadabra, just like that?

FRANKIE: Yes.

FRANKIE'S resolute composure seems to shake the A-Listers' confidence. They look at one another, not quite knowing what to think. FRANKENSTEIN turns to WOLF with a critical gaze.

FRANKENSTEIN: (To WOLF.) What is this? This some sort of angle?

WOLF: I left those games in Hollywood, Frankenstein. I'm not a movie monster anymore.

FRANKENSTEIN: That's right. You're an academic, now. Wolfie here is writing a big dissertation on Van Helsing. He's been calling my people asking questions about Spider.

WOLF: I'm still hoping you can find the time to sit down with me, Frank. I would hate for your movie to tell the wrong story.

FRANKENSTEIN: Is that an accusation?

WOLF: (With a building rage.) Not at all. Although, lest we forget, Spider was against the idea of monster movies. Wasn't she?

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes, she was. I forget, Tween Wolf, which side of that debate did you fall down on again?

DRACULA: What is he accusing us of?

CREATURE: Spider's murder, I think.

DRACULA: What? That's nonsense, Wolfie. Monsters can't touch the Blacksword... (*Seeing FRANKENSTEIN'S glare.*) Oh... I mean... Spider mysteriously disappeared.

FRANKIE: It's okay, Frank! We're just trying to find out what happened that day!

FRANKENSTEIN: We? (*Looking at FRANKIE, a realization.*) Oh, I see. Another scheme.

FRANKIE: What? No!

FRANKENSTEIN: I'm sorry to tell you, Wolfie, but my little sister has been pulling the wool over your eyes. Any second now, she'll use those colorful little notecards she's holding to explain how this Blacksword setup was meant to show us why she deserves to be in the movie.

FRANKIE: Frank, that's not what this is about!

FRANKENSTEIN grabs FRANKIE'S notecards, tears them and throws the pieces.

FRANKENSTEIN: I am going to say this once and for all. Frankenstein Ninety-Nine, you are not a movie monster.

Enter COB, CS, followed by SHADE. The SHADE, in a mask beneath a hood, glides forward and stands completely still behind the Blacksword.

COB: (*Gingerly.*) Hey, everybody... Salem Callaway is ready for the next take.

FRANKENSTEIN: (*Simmering anger.*) Alright. Let's not keep Mr. Callaway waiting.

DRACULA: I agree. Ribs! Where did Orwell go? Tell me at once!

RIBS: Uh... Important phone call. He said he'd be back in ten.

SCARECROW: Knowing Orwell, that could be ten minutes or ten hours.

FRANKENSTEIN: We're not waiting. Everyone set for the take.
Wolfie: if you touch our props, I'll have you thrown off set for good.
Frankie: you really want your shot? You want me or anyone else in this industry to notice you? Do your job.

A-Listers move to their places. TECHS sheepishly begin to fumble with set or tech pieces. COB moves to WOLF, BLUE, FEMUR and RIBS, while FRANKIE stands numbly to the side.

COB: What was that about?

RIBS: Short answer is... I don't think they believe us about the Blacksword.

WOLF: *(Staring intently at the A-Listers.)* Frank's hiding something. They all are.

COB: Are you two the research team?

BLUE: *(Also distracted.)* Blue. Official history scout or whatever. Is that really Salem Callaway?

COB: Yes. Frankenstein really seemed angry. He's not going to cooperate, is he?

RIBS: No. I don't think he will.

FEMUR: How is Wolf going to get a good look at the Blacksword now?

BLUE: Yeah, it's a real puzzle. Dang, that's really Salem Callaway, huh? Do you think he'd autograph this baseball?

COB: I doubt it. We were having a nice conversation until I went to get my sewing kit. When I got back, he had that mask on and wouldn't say another word to me.

FRANKIE, introspective now, begins moving slowly away from the group.

COB: Woah! Frankie! Where are you going?

FRANKIE: You heard Frank. We're going for another take, I need to get ready.

COB: *(Incensed.)* What? Are you kidding me? This whole investigation was your idea!

FRANKIE: A bad idea. You were right all along, Cob. We should have just told Orwell.

WOLF: Listen, kid, if that really is the Blacksword, we have to deal with it now. One touch of that thing is deadly for monsters!

FRANKIE: (*Shrugging, numbly.*) I touched it and I didn't die.

COB: This isn't about you, Frankie! Just because you didn't die doesn't mean—

FRANKIE: (*Boiling over.*) That it won't hurt real monsters? Is that what you were going to say? I am a monster. I'm a Frankenstein, do you hear me? I was made from a thousand pieces!

COB: (*Pointing to FRANKIE'S heart.*) There's only one piece your friends ever cared about.

FRANKIE angrily brushes past to retrieve the boom mic. She speaks bitterly now.

FRANKIE: Frankie's heart. Frankie's big, dumb heart. (*Bursting.*) I'm tired of being invisible, Cob. If this is what it takes to become a movie monster, then that's what I'm going to do.

FRANKENSTEIN: Quiet on set! Ready to go for a take!

TECH ONE: Turn over!

COB: (*Disbelieving.*) Frankenstein was right, wasn't he? This was never about doing the right thing for you. It was all just... one big audition.

RIBS: That's not true, Cob. Frankie, tell her!

FRANKENSTEIN: Lock it up! Sound!

FRANKIE: (*Dialed in, ignoring RIBS.*) Sound ready!

FEMUR: (*Wounded.*) Frankie!

FRANKENSTEIN: Roll Camera!

TECH TWO: Speed!

FRANKENSTEIN: Alright everyone, stand by! Ready... And...

SHADE: Action.

The SHADE, who speaks with an affected voice, moves forward and pulls the Blacksword from its pedestal. SFX: A magical disturbance. The lights flicker, the air crackles. The SHADE holds the Blacksword up toward DRACULA, who takes a careful step back.

DRACULA: Woah! Hey, that's not the blocking, is it?

FRANKENSTEIN: Callaway! Callaway, what are you doing?

Enter CALLAWAY, CS, holding a VAN HELSING mask.

CALLAWAY: Sorry, everyone, sorry! I stepped out for a quick meditation break. Are we ready for the next take? (*Noticing SHADE.*) Oh! I didn't know I needed a stunt double today.

WOLF: I don't think that's a stunt double.

The SHADE charges CALLAWAY. CALLAWAY ducks, screaming, as the sword comes down on a lighting cable. SFX: Sparks, followed by a momentary blackout. Lights return in a red wash. CREATURE and SCARECROW have huddled together. DRACULA has grabbed RIBS and FEMUR. Meanwhile, SHADE moves back and puts a hand on the concealing canvas.

FRANKENSTEIN: Everyone stay back!

CALLAWAY: What is happening?

DRACULA: (*With a terrified shriek.*) Skeletons! Protect me!

FEMUR: You got it, boss! Anyone who wants to stab you will have to stab through me!

DRACULA: (*Beat.*) Is there anyone else here who wants to protect me? Anyone with a body?

SCARECROW: Don't let go, Creature!

CREATURE: I've got you, Scarecrow! You know, this reminds me of a Marlon Brando party...

SCARECROW: Not now, Creature!

BLUE: Wolf... That can't be... That isn't...

WOLF: Tell us who you are! Why are you here?

SHADE: To finish the story.

SHADE pulls down the canvas, revealing the graffiti. Everyone recoils, gasping and screaming.

DRACULA: Van Helsing! (*Hiss.*)

SCARECROW: He's returned from the dead!

CREATURE: What do we do? What do we do?

SHADE: This is the part where you run.

The MONSTERS, horrified, all begin dashing for safety. The last two left on stage with the SHADE are FRANKIE, who has fallen CS, and COB, who sees her in peril. The SHADE levels the sword at FRANKIE until, surprisingly, they pull the sword back instead, kneeling in front of FRANKIE.

SHADE: Smoke and mirrors.

FRANKIE regards the SHADE with confusion. COB picks up FRANKIE and pushes her toward FEMUR and RIBS; in doing so, she has been left vulnerable. The SHADE grabs COB, and, while the others make for the wings and the lights begin to fade, readies the Blacksword to strike.

FRANKIE: Cob!

SHADE: Omnia monstra mori.

The SHADE stabs COB with the Blacksword, and COB collapses. Blackout.

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