

MONSTERS "R" US

Written by
Jesson Kinder

INT. MADAME ESME'S TENT - EVENING

FRANKIE FAUST -- 13, taped glasses, black eye -- sits at a circular table. Takes a puff from his inhaler.

He's inside an old-school tarot card reader's tent. A candle's red glow illuminates the room. He stares at an hastily scrawled address on a piece of paper.

MADAME ESME (O.S.)

Greetings.

Frankie jumps. MADAM ESME -- 40s, exotic, mysterious -- flips over tarot cards.

FRANKIE

H-H-Hi. Are you --

MADAME ESME

Madame Esme, yes. Come for a reading, young traveler?

FRANKIE

No, I...

MADAME ESME

Madame Esme sees all.

Madame Esme reads the cards.

MADAME ESME (CONT'D)

I see pain. So much pain.

Frankie looks up, tears well in his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. LOPEZ'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Frankie's standing before the class, textbook open, trying to recite Shakespeare's Macbeth. His stutter and fellow classmates' laughter -- egged on by none other than his teacher, MR. LOPEZ -- doesn't help.

MR. LOPEZ -- late 20s, mean-spirited, the oldest class clown you'll ever meet -- fires rubber bands at Frankie.

Frankie jumps, loses his place. He sighs, hangs his head.

CUT TO:

INT. BOYS' BATHROOM - DAY

Frankie covers his head as CHAD and BRAD DOYLE -- 17, twin bullies -- wail on him.

Chad and Brad snatch Frankie's backpack, dump the contents onto the floor. The twins sort through their ill-gotten gains, stuffing snacks and lunch money into their pockets.

Chad takes a puff of Frankie's inhaler, gets high as hell.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANKIE'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - LATER

Frankie's hyperventilating under a table as BELINDA -- 30s, his militant mother -- squares off with his father, DWIGHT -- late 30s, looks older -- both alcoholics by trade.

Dwight gets in Belinda's face.

Belinda shoves him.

Dwight grabs the fine china, starts breaking it.

Frankie gets in-between his parents.

They shove him aside.

Frankie lands face first, breaking his glasses.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANKIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frankie cries himself to sleep.

BACK TO:

INT. MADAME ESME'S TENT - EVENING

Madame Esme hands Frankie a handkerchief. He dries his eyes.

MADAME ESME

You can't eat or sleep. All you want is to make the pain go away.

FRANKIE

C-C-Can you make it g-go away?

MADAME ESME

There might be something... You must promise to never tell another soul what I'm about to show you.

FRANKIE

I s-s-swear.

Madame Esme moves to a dented footlocker with a lock on it, turns back to Frankie.

Frankie averts his eyes.

Madame Esme unlocks the footlocker, opens it, takes out a box made from... *human skin*.

She places the box on the table.

Frankie eyes the strange markings on the box. Madame Esme opens the box, revealing a series of morbid monster CANDLES.

MADAME ESME

Don't be afraid. Choose one.

Frankie chooses a monster with spikes for hair, pointed ears, and razor teeth.

FRANKIE

What's --

MADAME ESME

That's your problem solver. You can summon him for three tasks. After that, you must dispose of the candle. Understand?

Frankie nods.

MADAME ESME (CONT'D)

Should the candle be destroyed during a task, your command will be null and void. It is yours to command in body, mind and soul. Choose your words wisely.

She slides a box of matches to Frankie.

FRANKIE

Thank you. How much --

Madame Esme grabs Frankie's hand as he reaches for the matchbox. When she speaks again, it's in a whisper.

MADAME ESME
Only your word, Frankie.

FRANKIE
H-H-How did you know my name?

Madame Esme smiles, retreats into to shadows.

MADAME ESME
Run along now, young traveler. It
will be dark soon.

INT. FRANKIE'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frankie enters, finds Belinda and Dwight passed out in each other's arms. Frankie pulls out the matchbox, finds three matches inside, shrugs.

INT. BATHROOM - MIDNIGHT

Pitch black.

Frankie strikes a match, lights the candle.

A huge FLAME shoots up, startles him and he drops the candle.

FRANKIE
Shoot!

He fumbles for it in the dark.

A pair of yellow EYES shine, move towards Frankie.

Frankie hits the floor, backs up.

Blindly reaches for the door as a full blown asthma attack hits and the eyes creep closer.

He hits the light switch, comes face to face with a MONSTER.

Spikes for hair/pointed ears/razor sharp teeth...

The Monster's the gruesome candle made flesh.

Frankie wheezes.

The Monster puts a finger to Frankie's lip, shushes him.

Frankie's wheezing subsides.

The Monster helps Frankie to his feet.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Th-Thanks.

The Monster nods, kneels before him.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Oh, the task. Uh...

Frankie thinks. And thinks some more.

He whispers something in the Monster's ear.

INT. MR. LOPEZ'S HOUSE - MIDNIGHT

A classic comedy roast featuring Don Rickles plays on a TV.

Mr. Lopez chuckles. He's at a desk grading papers. There are a whole lot of Fs. He picks up Frankie's paper.

MR. LOPEZ
Enough with the filibusters, Stanky
Frankie. From now on, it's true or
false year round.

He stretches, shakes an empty beer can. He moves to the fridge, throws that sucker open.

The Monster jumps out!

Mr. Lopez screams, pisses his pants.

INT. FRANKIE'S ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Frankie's in bed, eyes glued to the candle's dancing flame.

The flame goes out.

Frankie shivers, slips under the bed covers.

INT. SCHOOL/CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Frankie enters, finds a new teacher, MS. HODGES -- 30s, kind, patient -- beaming at the class. She hands him a candy bar.

MS. HODGES
Hi, Frankie! I'm Ms. Hodges. Mr.
Lopez... isn't feeling well so I'll
be here for the rest of the
semester. Nice to meet you.

FRANKIE

You too.

Frankie smiles to himself, takes his seat. Ms. Hodges flings a marker into the air, catches it behind her back.

MS. HODGES

Let's get ready to rumble!

Frankie and the class cheer.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

Frankie's in line. Two Teenage Girls (TINA and STEPHANIE) text/talk/throw food on their plates ahead of him.

TINA

She's great. It's gonna suck when Mr. Lopez gets back.

STEPHANIE

No way. He's in the loony bin.

TINA

He what? Steph, who told you that?

STEPHANIE

Rita Rawlins.

TINA

Rita "Ritaline" Rawlins? Please.

STEPHANIE

Tina, she lives like two houses down from him.

TINA

So?

STEPHANIE

So she says he was running down the street screaming. And he had dropped a deuce in his pants.

TINA

Ew!

Frankie looks sick to his stomach, hurries out.

INT. BOYS' BATHROOM - LATER

Frankie's at a sink, washing his face. Chad and Brad appear in the mirror beside him.

CHAD
It's Stanky Frankie!

BRAD
They let him go to the bathroom
alone? What if he has an accident?

The Twin bullies grin, block the exit.

Frankie dashes into a stall, locks the door.

The Doyle twins kick at the door.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Where's our money, Frankie?!

CHAD
And you better have another
inhaler. My buzz is starting to
wear off!

FRANKIE
Leave me alone!

CHAD
Or what?

FRANKIE
O-O-Or you'll be s-s-s...

The Doyle twins laugh.

BRAD
We're gonna count to five, Stanky.

FRANKIE
Don't hurt yourselves.

BRAD
Oooh. He's got jokes.

CHAD
Won't be some funny after we jack
his ass up.

BRAD
Uno... Dos...

CHAD
Tres... Cuatro...

Frankie -- lit candle in his hands -- kicks the door open.

FRANKIE
Cinco. Sic 'em!

The Doyle twins exchange a look. Who's Frankie talking to?

The Monster crashes through the mirror, grabs them by their shirts, lifts them off their feet!

Chad and Brad scream.

Frankie winces as the Monster breaks their arms and legs.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

PRINCIPAL ADAMS -- 40s, unflappable, a hard-ass with heart -- turns his monitor facing someone.

There's footage of Frankie heading to the bathroom, followed by the Doyle twins.

Frankie's sitting across from Chad and Brad, both in full body casts and wheelchairs.

PRINCIPAL ADAMS
You boys headed in the same
direction based on the footage. Do
you know what happened, Frankie?
See anything strange?

FRANKIE
N-No, Sir.

Principal Adams chews on that, eyes the Doyle twins.

PRINCIPAL ADAMS
Anything you boys want to tell me?

Frankie stares at Chad and Brad, who tremble.

CHAD/BRAD
No, Sir! / Not a thing!

PRINCIPAL ADAMS
So you hurt yourselves that bad by
doing backflips off the toilet?

The Doyle twins look at each other, Principal Adams, nod.
Frankie smiles to himself.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Frankie, backpack slung over his shoulder, still smiling. He struts down the hall as Students rush out of his way, clear the path for him.

He marches up to a few Students, unzips his empty backpack.

Students throw cash/snacks/baseball cards/phones/video games/jewelry inside, run.

INT. FRANKIE'S HOUSE/FRANKIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Frankie throws his spoils on the bed, laughs.

INT. FRANKIE'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frankie enters, finds Belinda and Dwight waiting for him.

And stone sober from the looks of them.

BELINDA

Where have you been?

Frankie swings open the fridge, grabs a beer.

DWIGHT

Your mother asked you a question.

FRANKIE

At the movies, Dwight. Not that it's any of your business.

Frankie cracks open the beer, has a sip.

BELINDA

What do you think you're doing?!

FRANKIE

I can't be the designated driver all the time, now can I?

Dwight rises, unbuckles his belt. Belinda raises a hand, moves to Frankie.

BELINDA

You're grounded until I say otherwise. But first --

Belinda snatches the beer.

BELINDA (CONT'D)
Drop and give me a hundred!

Frankie scoffs, turns away from her. Belinda grabs his arm and he shrugs her off. She slaps him around.

BELINDA (CONT'D)
What are you, crazy?! When I say
hit the deck, you hit the deck!

Frankie glares at Belinda and Dwight, reaches into his pockets, gets out the candle and the last match...

FRANKIE
No.

BELINDA
What did you --

FRANKIE
I SAID NO!

Frankie lights the candle. The power cuts out.

BELINDA
Damn it, Dwight!

DWIGHT
Beer money is beer money.

FRANKIE
Sic 'em.

GROWLING.

DWIGHT
You hear that?

FLICKERING LIGHTS reveal the Monster pouncing on Dwight, driving his head against the wall until it makes a sickening CRACK. Dwight's lifeless body slides to the floor.

BELINDA
No! Frankie, we have to --

Belinda turns, finds Frankie sitting cross-legged, holding the candle. Enjoying *the horror show*...

Frankie turns to the Monster, points to Belinda.

Belinda races up the stairs.

The Monster crawls along the walls after her.

INT. BELINDA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Belinda grabs bullets from her closet, loads a gun.

She aims at the door, waits.

The door unlocks, slowly opens.

Belinda yanks it open, prepares to shoot.

Nothing out there.

BEHIND HER, in the closet -- YELLOW EYES peer at her from the shadows. Belinda spins around.

The Monster leaps out of the closet, comes at her!

Belinda opens fire.

The Monster keeps coming, knocks the gun away, slams her to the ground.

Frankie enters, candle held high.

BELINDA

Frankie, what have you done?!

FRANKIE

What I had to. Nobody's going to bully me anymore. Nobody.

(to the Monster)

Finish it.

Belinda grabs her gun, blasts the candle out of Frankie's hands. The Monster DISAPPEARS.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

No!

Frankie opens the matchbox. Empty.

BELINDA

It's over.

Frankie shoves Belinda away, grabs the candle's remains, runs out of the room.

BELINDA (CONT'D)

Frankie!

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Frankie throws open drawers and cupboards in search of matches or lighters.

He bangs a fist on the stove, gets an idea...

He turns on the burners just as Belinda enters, gun drawn on her young son. She drops the gun, moves to him.

BELINDA
Frankie, you gotta stop. I'm
sorry, baby. For everything.

Frankie lights the candle.

FRANKIE
I'm not.

Madame Esme appears.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Where's the monster?

MADAME ESME
Poor little traveler. You
shouldn't have lit that candle.

FRANKIE
Where is it?!

MADAME ESME
The task is null and void, besides
the candle's been damaged.

FRANKIE
So get another one! A new monster!

MADAME ESME
I already have.

She snaps her fingers and she and Frankie DISAPPEAR.

BELINDA
Frankie? Frankie?!

Belinda sinks to the floor.

INSIDE A DARK DUNGEON

MONSTERS in cages growl/pace/claw at cell doors.

FRANKIE (O.S.)
You don't understand! I'm not
supposed to be here! I'm not a --

IN THE LAST CAGE

Frankie -- four red eyes, horns, zombie complexion -- steps
into the light, whimpers.

FRANKIE
Monster...

His cries turn into monstrous roars.

INT. MADAME ESME'S TENT - EVENING

Madame Esme takes more ghoulish candles out of the box made
from human flesh, looks right at the camera.

MADAME ESME
Don't be afraid. Choose one.

CLOSE on a candle that looks just like monster Frankie...

CUT TO BLACK.