

## Frankenstein's Scary Lab Assistants

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### **The Films**

#### Universal Studios

Frankenstein (1931) – Fritz  
Bride of Frankenstein (1935) – Pretorius & Karl  
Son of Frankenstein (1939) – Ygor & Benson  
Ghost of Frankenstein (1942) – Kettering & Bohmer  
Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (1943) – Mannering  
House of Frankenstein (1944) – Niemann & Daniel  
House of Dracula (1945) – Nina & Miliza  
Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948) – Mornay & Stevens

#### Hammer Studios

Curse of Frankenstein (1957) – Krempe  
Revenge of Frankenstein (1958) – Kleve & Karl  
Evil of Frankenstein (1964) – Hans & Zoltan  
Frankenstein Created Woman (1967) – Hans & Hertz  
Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed (1969) – Karl  
Horror of Frankenstein (1970) – Wilhelm & graverobber  
Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell (1974) – Helder

### Introduction

Fans of Frankenstein films seemingly have a never-ending battle of ceaselessly comparing the Universal Studio versions with those from Hammer Studios. To me, they are both good and both have much to offer. The Universal versions have primarily Dr. Henry Frankenstein (Colin Clive) and his sons, Wolf and Ludwig, with a few others whereas the Hammer versions have Baron Victor Frankenstein (Peter Cushing). One topic that has not had much discussion is their lab assistants, essentially the supporting cast for the main actor. This seemingly minor role of lab assistant is actually more important than you might think. And in the Frankenstein films there are significant differences between the Universal lab assistants and the Hammer lab assistants.

### Yes, Master

In each case, the lab master/director is either Henry (Universal) or Victor (Hammer) Frankenstein (and a few others) and this article is about the help each had in the construction of their monsters. To simplify the discussions each will be referred to with their given names of Henry and Victor so there will be Henry's

assistants and Victor's assistants. In the Universal film series Henry was in the first two with his sons participating in *Son of Frankenstein* (Wolf Frankenstein played by Basil Rathbone) and in *Ghost of Frankenstein* (Ludwig Frankenstein played by Sir Cedrick Hardwicke). Yes, it does get confusing with no Frankenstein heir in FMTWM or the two 'House' films but we will continue nevertheless.

Many levels of laboratory assistant (aka, lab ass)

From all the films it is clear there are several levels of lab assistant from those with a minimal to no education at all (not sure if Fritz or Ygor can read or write) to those with a college education and even perhaps advanced degrees and years of experience. What sort of salary did Fritz receive? Any retirement benefits? Did he have health insurance? Though Ygor received some money from Wolf Frankenstein is that his only means of support? Also, where does Ygor get his food? Does he live off the land (catching game), begs, steals, or is given food?

In the later films of the series do the other physician lab assistants have side jobs (many physicians do part time work at emergency/urgent care facilities) or just research? If just research then where does their salary come from? Did any of them volunteer to work with Frankenstein?

Personal experience

In my own research career than has spanned over 40 years I have had many lab assistants whose experience dramatically varied from high school dropouts (the majority did not last long though one, surprisingly, lasted longer than most) to, believe it or not, those with Ph.D. and M.D. degrees. These advance degree individuals typically wanted to change careers and were willing to start at a lower paying job to learn the skills they are looking for. Though they were well prepared I was not interested in these people because of the amount of training involved. It does take time, depending upon the skill and interest level of the lab assistant, to train them to do the work necessary, to become familiar with the procedures in the lab, and those with advanced degrees could easily leave and seek work elsewhere making your training time seem like a waste. It also takes time to seek a replacement with interviews and checking references so it is always best to keep lab assistants for as long as possible, at least a few years, to maximize your investment. Searching for a new lab assistant every few months is a major expense of time and energy which would be better spent on designing and conducting experiments.

It should be noted that in the real world the successful candidate would have some lab experience and be able to obtain reliable and valid results with a high level of accuracy. However, lab assistants have to start somewhere and there are those lab directors who are looking for recent college graduates so their pay is minimal. More experienced lab assistants would command a higher salary and increased benefits. In this day and age those without college degrees who are

working in a biomedical lab setting are left for the menial and subservient jobs, typically janitorial, vivarium attendant, or perhaps a driver.

#### Applicants wanted

A potential job description for a Frankenstein lab assistant could go as follows (which would be an ad in the "Transylvania Times"):

"Wanted. Responsible lab assistant to help in general bioelectrical and rejuvenation experiments. Must be able to work odd hours, including weekends, and help in data sampling, testing, measuring, recording, and analyzing in cooperation with the lab director. No experience nor ethics necessary. Best to have a complete lack of conscience." Apparently, Fritz was a successful applicant and was hired.

#### What do lab assistants do?

The duties and responsibilities of a lab assistant depend upon their experience, qualifications, and perhaps willingness to learn new techniques. Also, much of this depends upon the disposition and personality of the lab director. For example, if the director is authoritarian and dictatorial (unfortunately, I know too many like this) then lab assistants may cower in his presence and be hesitant to speak freely. If the director is more even-tempered then there may be more harmony in the lab and therefore happier assistants and easier communication.

Like any work environment those with a sense of humor have happier workers. Same goes in a research lab. With long days and stressful work then humor and levity help ease the tension. A happier workplace would mean more content workers who, in general, are better at their jobs. Furthermore, music seems to be a staple in some labs as long as it is not too loud or disruptive; headphones or earbuds are the way to go.

Even so, most lab assistants should be able to perform certain lab tests, including both pre- and post-analytic aspects, without supervision. In addition, preparing samples and specimens are also key in their work. For this the lab assistant should be able to produce accurate and reliable data.

#### Responsibilities

Lab assistants are tasked to follow certain methods and perform certain routine procedures. In some cases, at the request of the lab director, assistants can research particular topics and obtain information/data. Also, the lab assistant should follow lab policies as well as health and safety guidelines. Some lab assistants, especially those with Master's degrees or higher, take responsibilities further and sometimes incorporate their own ideas into the lab work.

It also incumbent for lab assistants to continue to know recent developments in their fields. They should know the best techniques and procedures. In other words, they should be interested and motivated to keep up to date. Other responsibilities of the lab assistant include documenting his work in a notebook,

keeping relevant records, and maintaining a functional and clean work area. And depending on what their skill level is they may also help with administrative duties and supervisory work.

Lab assistants should be able to handle and process samples, know how to work various pieces of equipment as well as their care, cleaning, and maintenance. Also, the assistants must be able to carry out the plans and directions of the lab manager and make sure there are adequate supplies and inventory of key lab items so work continues uninterrupted.

### Sense of Duty

A duty is a sense of commitment or expectation to perform some action. Many times such duties involve ethics and morality, particularly in honor cultures such as the military. Some duties are law created that are punishable or liable while others are religious or social. Duties also imply some sort of sacrifice of self-interest. There is duty of being a human, to one's place in life (family, country, job), to one's character, and to one's own moral expectations, low or high. Succinctly, there are civic, filial, and legal duties.

Duties among lab assistants vary considerably and depend upon the particular individual; some are able to handle more than others. I have met some minimal wage helpers that have a higher sense of duty than some with higher degrees, some of whom their only sense of duty is to themselves.

Common duties include receiving, storing, and collecting specimens ("a police case", says Fritz), recording results, cleaning lab equipment, and perhaps even launching kites during electrical storms. Furthermore, necessary duties may include evening, weekend, or overnight work hours.

### Requirements

So, you want to become a lab assistant. What are the requirements? First of all, a lab assistant will work under the guidance of a lab professional. Typically, some sort of minimal education is required with at least a high school or equivalent diploma. Though most lab assistants get training on the job it is preferred that there is some prior training which can vary considerably. In some cases the lab assistant has completed an internship somewhere else so there is some prior training. For many of the assistants there was formal education and certification. If there is specific training this can often be obtained through certificate programs.

More often than naught biological lab assistants tend to be the best educated since the work requires an understanding of the processes and procedures of what is being done. In many cases prior work experience is a necessity for the level of sophisticated work required, for example, the building a body in order to bring it to life. The lab assistant should be familiar with lab equipment and able to potentially handle large amounts of data. Ideally, the lab assistant will pay

close attention to detail and have some sort of analytical judgement. In some instances the lab assistant will need a license or certification for the work at hand.

Ideally, the lab assistant would have a strong attention to detail, make good analytical judgements, and have good manual dexterity. Even something as simple as labeling specimens (helps distinguish between normal and abnormal brains) can be critical. Unless there is appropriate quality control, a key requirement, then the obtained data may be difficult to interpret. It would be a professional responsibility of the lab assistant to know the necessary requirements of his work. The lab assistant would be required to help the director in any way possible including a willingness to keep confidential all records, data, and results.

#### Skill set necessary

The most important skill set for a lab assistant to have is the ability to organize and prioritize work, to follow instructions. Though most of this comes from the lab director this is not a "24/7" time frame where the director hovers over the lab assistant constantly giving orders. Much of what the assistant does is on his own so he must know what is important 'now', 'right now', and what can be done at a more convenient time. This gives the assistant some wiggle room to better plan the necessary work. Furthermore, as a skill set, for giving directions it would make the work a lot easier for Henry, Victor, and their ilk if the lab assistant had no training in ethics and best if he did not know what the word means.

#### Communication skills

Communication involves both speaking and writing. The most important requirement of a lab assistant is being able to follow instructions, even if complex (at least Fritz got a brain, even though a damaged one; could he read?). And precise directions and not change them at a particular whim (that is up to the lab director). Also important is his ability to interact well with fellow lab members, especially the lab director which in the case of these films is Baron Frankenstein himself followed by his protégés and colleagues.

#### Loyalty

Loyalty is a devotion or fidelity, both thought and action, to someone or something. Loyalty is a wholehearted commitment, a fidelity in service, love, or an oath. The object of this loyalty can vary considerably and encompass a wide range such as causes, ideals, religions, governments, families, friends, or groups. For our Frankenstein films loyalty of servants and assistants is to the master which means doing whatever Henry and Victor want, no questions asked. Other aspects of loyalty involve attitude (loyalties towards other people), basis (foundation of facts), legitimacy (important among multiple loyalties themselves), scope (from simple to whatever may be necessary), and strength ("blood is thicker than water"). Many lab assistants spend years working with their lab

directors so there can be a familiarity that goes beyond an employer/employee relationship which is at the core of loyalty.

If there are two loyalties then which takes precedence? Which one is 'legitimate'? This is a problem that Krempe has who is initially loyal to Victor but eventually lost this loyalty due to another 'higher loyalty', namely, an affront to Nature.

Then there is misguided loyalty where a person is loyal to some misguided or malignant cause. Excessive loyalty is fanaticism. Lastly, sometimes loyalty can be bought or taken care of legally via a Confidentiality Disclosure Agreement (CDA), which legally ensures 'loyal' silence.

#### Education at Universal

Based on what is seen in the films one can readily surmise that the Universal Fritz, Karl, and Ygor have minimal, if any, education. At least Karl could read; with Pretorius he is seen reading the inscription on a coffin. Others in the film franchises have advanced degrees, either an M.D. or a Ph.D., such as Pretorius, Kettering, Bohmer, Mannering, Mornay, and Stevens. In HOD both assistants, Nina and Miliza, are also nurses. All with high skill sets. With these some seem more competent and sincere than others so were references checked before they were hired? Were there any letters of recommendation? Were these assistants paid livable wages?

#### Education at Hammer

Krempe originally started as a tutor and teacher of the young Baron so a high skill set was already in place. Also, Krempe learned with the Baron as they went along in their years of studies. In the Hammer films the Baron's other assistants were primarily highly educated, many with medical degrees. Hans #2 from FCW is perhaps the least educated of the Hammer lab assistants with Karl from RoF not far behind.

#### Workaholics

Long hours, difficult conditions, and a willingness to make sacrifices are all part of working with Frankenstein and his colleagues. No rest for any of them. Based on these films it seems that the assistants have no personal life. In A&CMF the good doctors were essentially forced to attend a party. Stevens only went so he could oogle one of the girls.

#### Apprentice / Internship

While both of the terms, intern and apprentice, may apply to our various lab assistants they have little value since both types are there to help and assist. An apprentice is learning new skills whereas an intern is applying his skills to a deeper level. Dr. Frankenstein and his followers are only concerned with how the assistant can effectively help and not about labels.

## Hammer

Most of the Hammer lab assistants are highly trained, competent, and efficient. In RoF, the Baron was forced to do routine lab duties, like feeding the animals, that Karl did without asking which underscores the 'routineness' of the work. It appears the Baron never gave much thought to the day-to-day responsibilities and duties of his staff.

## You're hired

Under what circumstances did the lab assistants, from Fritz (low) to Kleve (high), meet either the Baron or his protégés / colleagues / collaborators? Unanswered questions hover around the how and why they were hired. It appears that some of the assistants are volunteers so where do they get their income?

## Universal

### *Frankenstein* (1931)

The first scene of Fritz is when he helps Henry dig up a grave. Fritz is curious about the funeral and tries to observe the proceedings. Curiosity is good sign. Henry comments, "Down, you fool", suggesting Henry has little regard or respect for his assistant by the use of the derogatory word, fool.

When searching for bodies Henry and Fritz went to a dead man hanging on a gibbet scaffold and Fritz made the comment, "It's still here" suggesting he knew about the available corpse (apparently Henry did not) and brought Henry there to claim it. This is one of the duties of a lab assistant, to help in sourcing important lab supplies and Fritz knew where there was a readily available corpse. (Note: a gibbet is a gallows with an upright post with a crosspiece, forming an L- or T-shaped structure from which executed criminals are hung for public viewing. In Universal's, *Frankenstein*, this gibbet is an L-shaped structure.). When Henry asks Fritz to cut down the body he at first hesitates but Henry bullies him into the act saying, "He (the hanged man) can't hurt you", again suggesting Henry has little respect for his assistant.

Later, no doubt under the direction of Henry, Fritz steals a brain. Though the wrong one is not the point. Fritz did as ordered by Henry and put himself at risk, irrespective of the consequences, legal or otherwise. Out in the field Fritz does his best, though stealing the wrong brain is an issue.

In Henry's lab Fritz does not appear to do much. He tries to keep the monster in check with a whip and torch, answers the door, and adjusts the electrical devices on the roof of the castle lab ("You finished with those connections?" asks Henry). Though Fritz has a handicap (hunchback?, leg deformity?) it did not interfere with his work for Henry. In general though, Henry constantly belittles and bullies Fritz and talks down to him.

When Dr. Henry Frankenstein left medical school and began to build his lab he would need help in the work. In the real world most scientists do have lab assistants to help with the more routine lab work and no doubt Frankenstein did too. So, how did Henry acquire Fritz? In the real world there are job postings and recommendations from colleagues. Did Fritz apply or was he recommended? What references did Fritz use and who would recommend him? Henry must have interviewed Fritz for the job and one wonders how this went? Were others also interviewed and Fritz was the best available? Henry is European aristocracy whereas Fritz is not so under what circumstances did they meet? Fritz is a different social class than Frankenstein, the son of a Baron, so how they met and under what circumstances are of interest.

“Don’t touch that!”, exclaims Fritz to Waldman as the professor was looking at the monster’s body on the bench, suggesting a protective ownership of the work, a sense of loyalty, and not wanting Waldman, or anyone, looking at his master’s work.

Fritz torments the monster with a whip and a torch. Henry acknowledges the harsh treatment of the monster by Fritz so why does Henry tolerate such behavior? (sounds like Henry has no other alternative for a lab assistant. Fritz is it.). Later, the monster kills Fritz. Henry regrets this commenting, “Poor Fritz”, suggesting he will miss the help Fritz provided so Fritz did have some value to Henry. Maybe a little friendship in there too? Oftentimes, lab directors become friendly with their staff and encourage a family-like atmosphere. Was there joking and camaraderie between them?

What, if any, experience did Fritz have? What sort of schooling, if any, did he have? Since Fritz just saw a jar with a brain – and apparently was not able to or couldn’t read the label - would suggest that he did not know how to read. That or he just picked a jar with a brain and the label was irrelevant. Since he was instructed to get a brain – any brain – then that is exactly what he did so we are really not sure if he can indeed read. In SoF, Wolf comments, “An unforeseen blunder of a stupid assistant”, also suggesting Fritz is not well educated.

#### *The Bride of Frankenstein (1935)*

Henry’s assistants in this film are Karl and Pretorius. Karl is a lab lackey whereas Pretorius, though an assistant, is essentially a colleague. The first we see of Karl is when he is leaning against a tree as the Burgomaster asks, “Where is he (the monster)?” and Karl just points. Karl is seen again standing next to the Burgomaster as the monster escapes from prison. Karl is really an assistant for Pretorius. Karl helps Pretorius open a coffin and Karl reads the inscription on the lid so this assistant has been educated enough to be able to read.

Once in Henry’s lab Karl wears a lab coat of sorts and is seen doing menial gofer work around the lab. Karl braves the elements of an electrical storm to release kites which will capture lightning to revive the monster. For the key moment Karl

says, "The kites! The kites! Get 'em ready! Ludwig! He wants the kites!" What is interesting here is that even someone as low as Karl has someone under him, namely Ludwig. Does Ludwig have any training? Ludwig is also seen assisting in the lab, pushing a lab table. Where and when did Ludwig meet Henry since we essentially know nothing about him?

Later, Karl assists in the kidnapping of Elizabeth and commits murder to get a "very fresh" heart...and lies by justifying the heart as "a police case". Committing crimes and putting oneself at risk for his master is loyalty, though misguided. As it goes in these films the monster throws Karl off a castle parapet.

#### *Son of Frankenstein* (1939)

Ygor presents an interesting situation. Though he could be considered a lab helper he is mostly there because of his influence and control over the monster. Wolf Frankenstein understood this and more or less kept Ygor at arm's length. Ygor was there when needed but not really an important part of the work. He does a lot of watching and not much else. A member of the city council says, "They even have ol' Ygor helping them". Ygor was loyal as long as it pertained to "my friend", the monster. Ygor says to the council, "I help Frankenstein...he pays me money." Ygor did help uncrate boxes of delivered equipment and cleaning and preparing the refurbished lab.

Thomas (name engraved in pocket watch) Benson, the butler/assistant, is more of a help and assistant to Wolf than Ygor. Benson helps by taking notes for Wolf and overall assisting in the lab work. As Wolf describes him, "This man is not just my servant. He has been with me for years, helping me with my experiments. I need him now to make notes." As Wolf conducts a medical examination on the monster Benson is keeping notes. Benson is alert and attentive and appears interested in the work at hand, all traits of a good lab assistant.

#### *Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942)

Dr. Ludwig Frankenstein, son of Henry, is the director at a mental institute for "diseases of the mind". Assisting Ludwig are Drs. Kettering and Bohmer. Both are highly educated (physicians) but it is Bohmer who's lust for power and his ego are at the center of the plot.

As an assistant Ygor helps in the recovery of the monster. Ygor first extracts the monster from the sulfur pit and then takes him to the countryside to avoid villagers and then to Ludwig. Ygor knows the monster has a sick mind and body and brings him to Ludwig for treatment. Ygor being Ygor uses bribery to get Ludwig to take care of the monster.

After a successful brain operation assistant Kettering comments, "The first time a human brain has been removed from a skull, subjected to surgery, and then replaced it." We do not see much of Kettering since the monster kills him early

on in the film. Later, Ludwig attempts to transplant Kettering's brain into the monster but Ygor changed these plans.

Bohmer is Ludwig's key assistant. Due to a "slight miscalculation" Bohmer was drummed out of his medical society and apparently the only job he could get was with Ludwig. (Under what circumstances did Ludwig interview Bohmer for the job as assistant?). Ludwig comments to Bohmer after the successful operation, "You blazed the trail. It was you who pointed the way." Bohmer further comments, "In those days, I was the master and Frankenstein was just a pupil."

Ygor's plans of his brain going into the monster's body instead of Kettering's was readily accepted by the glory-conscious Bohmer, who wants to be the head of his profession and sees this brain transplant as his means to get reinstated.

After bringing the monster to his lab Ludwig says, "Dr. Bohmer, I need your aid. This monster must be destroyed...He was made limb by limb, organ by organ and must be unmade in the same way...dissection." Bohmer comments, "But this thing lives. It would be murder...I regret doctor I cannot be a part of your plan." Which is out of character for someone willing to use Ygor's brain to advance his own career.

For the operation Ludwig also says to Ygor, "I may need your assistance." Then after the brain transplant operation Ludwig says to Bohmer, "I can never thank you sufficiently for your assistance and skill. This may bring you the recognition which has long been due to you." This is an unusual comment of the lab chief praising an assistant since most chiefs are prone to take all the credit of their lab workers. Lab assistants should deserve the credit they never receive. The accolades Ludwig Frankenstein bestows onto Bohmer are an exception.

#### *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (1943)*

Though there is no formal Dr. Frankenstein in this film we do have Henry's daughter, Elsa. Through her we get a Henry replacement with Dr. Mannering. Mannering takes all the action to another level by not only reviving the monster but also treating Larry Talbot and his lycanthropy. Instead of decreasing the energy of the monster, as he told Elsa and the villagers, he does just the opposite and infuses even more energy bringing the monster to full power.

Mannering says, "To be able to cure this man (Talbot) I have to know who he is", suggesting a strong sense of dedication in wanting to care for his patient. Mannering follows Talbot all over Europe ("You were very easy to find. The newspapers told me where to look for you...I simply followed the trail (through four towns) and found you.") demonstrating his strong work ethic as well as his sense of duty. After all, Talbot was his patient and being a dutiful doctor made sure his patients were under proper care.

When allowed Mannering examines the monster and makes a physical evaluation. All indicative of a caring doctor. To refurbish Ludwig's old lab, destroyed in a fire seen at the end of *Ghost of Frankenstein*, Mannering must have gotten assistance from Talbot and Maleva the gypsy woman though we do not actually see them working in the lab. On occasion Talbot did help Mannering set up the lab so this could qualify him as a lab assistant. Same goes for Elsa Frankenstein, daughter of Henry, who did appear to lend a hand in refurbishing the lab.

#### *House of Frankenstein (1944)*

Again, no Frankenstein family member, but we have a just-as-demented Dr. Niemann (Boris Karloff) who has his assistant, Daniel. During an opening scene we see Niemann giving Daniel a lesson in chemistry and rejuvenation. (For more details please see the Rondo nominated article, "Dr. Gustav Niemann's Chalk Notes", in *Scary Monsters #85*.) One indication of their relationship is Daniel keeps referring to Niemann as "master". Daniel is treated more as a slave/servant than as an assistant. Daniel commits murders on the orders of Niemann ("I've killed four men for you", says Daniel) suggesting misguided loyalty. Daniel cannot read so his education is minimal.

At one point Daniel asks Niemann, "Did you know Frankenstein?" Niemann responds, "No. But my brother who assisted him learned his secrets but before he died he passed them on to me." Quite an interesting comment. Who was his brother? Fritz? Karl? Someone else, and if so, then when did he work with Henry? After the events of BoF and before Wolf and Ludwig were of age? Also, how long did Niemann's brother work for Henry? On more monsters or some other unrelated project?

Talbot and Elena help restore Niemann's lab in Visaria so in this respect they are lab helpers too.

#### *House of Dracula (1945)*

Our Dr. Frankenstein doppelganger in this film is Dr. Edelman. His assistants are Miliza and Nina, both nurses as well as lab assistants. These two lab assistants are perhaps some of the most skilled and talented of all helpers. Their expertise seems to encompass not only lab work but also botany, immunology, chemistry, hematology, not to mention nursing. They appear quite willing to assist Edelman in any of his schemes without question. Very loyal and dedicated.

#### *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948)*

Though there was no Dr. Frankenstein or relative in the *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein* film it is included for completist sake. Both of the lab assistants in that film, Dr. Sandra Mornay and Professor Stevens (not sure who is assisting who), are listed in the Table.

Mornay appears to be the lead and Stevens her colleague and assistant though there are moments where it appears he is doing independent work and makes his own decisions. Nevertheless, all are under the ultimate control of Dr. Lajos (aka, Dracula, aka Bela Lugosi). It is noted that both Mornay and Stevens open the front door to their castle instead of servants.

Dr. Lajos wants to use the just built lab at the castle to revive the monster. Mornay and Stevens are there to help and assist. Lajos wants to have Wilbur's brain (Lou Costello) transplanted into the monster and Mornay will do the operation.

Lajos says, "I'm accustomed to having my orders obeyed", suggesting that no matter who is the assistant his orders are to be fulfilled. Lajos appears competent while operating some of the electrical equipment in the lab so he could be considered in essence our Frankenstein doppelganger.

### **Hammer**

#### *Curse of Frankenstein (1957)*

In this film the Baron Frankenstein begins his studies around the age of 15. His hired tutor, Krempe, is at first a significant help as a teacher and mentor. Krempe has a high skill set and as a teacher and colleague has many responsibilities, duties, and is initially loyal to the Baron. Later, he becomes a partner and assistant in the lab work. Among other things Krempe helps the Baron obtain a body (from a gibbet) and body parts. It appears Krempe spent about 10 years with Victor.

After realizing the uncomfortable ethical issues of body stealing Krempe turns and becomes an antagonist to the Baron and eventually shoots and kills the monster. After Krempe shoots the monster dead the Baron comments, "I don't think I shall ever forgive you for what you've done...ever!" The Baron and teacher have gone separate ways even to the point that Krempe disowned the jailed Baron who was on his way to the guillotine. Krempe has gone from tutor to assistant to punisher.

#### *Revenge of Frankenstein (1958)*

Lab assistant Karl Immelmann helps Victor escape the guillotine (being replaced by a priest in his place) indicating Karl is a loyal associate willing to risk much to help his master. How and when did Victor meet and interview (!) Karl for the job of assistant?

Karl must have helped Victor (now known as 'Dr. Victor Stein') assemble a new lab and obtain some of the specimens (eyes, hand, arm). Karl also takes care of animals such as rabbits, guinea pigs, mice, and rats including a chimp in a cage.

For another assistant Victor talks to Dr. Hans Kleve who says, "I want to be the pupil of the greatest doctor, the finest medical brain in the world. Your pupil, Dr. Frankenstein...your knowledge in exchange for my assistance." This sounds like Kleve is volunteering so apparently he does not need an income.

When viewing Victor's lab Kleve is very astute and attentive. A quick study suggesting he has a grasp of the responsibilities and duties needed. Victor comments to Kleve, "(Karl) has a fine brain. He's quick, intelligent and has absorbed a great deal of knowledge since working with me." Victor is planning on transplanting Karl's brain into a new pieced-together body that does not have Karl's physical deformity (right side paralysis and slight hunchback).

Karl donates his body (and brain) to Victor's experiment and this must be considered the highest form of loyalty. Kleve helps with the surgical operation of removing Karl's brain and putting it into the cranium of the new body. Kleve also helps with post-operation care. Victor comments to Kleve after the successful operation saying, "Thank you for your assistance."

Once it was disclosed that Dr. Victor Stein is indeed the original Dr. Frankenstein his patients at a charity surgical clinic beat him up. Afterwards he says to Kleve, "You know what to do." Kleve responds, "I do". This indicates Victor's trust in Kleve's competence and skill. All in all, a very good assistant indeed. Kleve operates on the mangled Victor and puts his brain into a new stitched-together body. The new "Dr. Franck" comments, "You were an excellent pupil, Hans. This scar will hardly show." Kleve, loyal to the end.

#### *Evil of Frankenstein (1964)*

Hans is working at a surgery clinic with the Baron and gets him to admit that he is indeed the Baron Frankenstein. Hans wants to work with him to expand his medical knowledge and experience. Hans is very loyal to Baron Frankenstein and helps him in his work. After his first lab is destroyed - "They always destroy everything!", says the Baron - Hans helps him build another. Even when being chased by the police Hans helps the fugitive Baron escape so Hans is complicit in criminal activity. In this way Hans is more like a partner than an assistant.

To free the mental anguish of his monster the Baron seeks the help of hypnotist, Zoltan, thinking he could hypnotize the monster thereby controlling him. Zoltan is self-serving and extorts help from the Baron. Zoltan brags, "There's not a man born of woman that I can't put under" (i.e., hypnotize). Baron responds, "This should be interesting", meaning what about a man 'made, not born'? True to his word, Zoltan has the monster under his mental control and does his bidding including stealing gold and murdering others. In many respects, Zoltan is more of an anti-assistant.

After escaping the law again Hans and the Baron stop for a brief rest. The Baron asks, "Why do you stay with me, Hans?" Hans replies, "To tell you the truth, I've

often wondered that myself.” Baron says, “You get nothing but misery with me.” Hans answers, “No. There is something else. Knowledge.” Baron adds, “You can get that at University.” Hans replies, “Not the knowledge you have. I think you have discovered what all the others are searching for. I think you have found the true secret of life.” Hans is well motivated - in for a penny, in for a pound – and is willing to do anything, even criminal activity, to seek knowledge and answers from the Baron.

It should be noted that a deaf mute (“beggar girl”) helps in the care of the monster so she can be considered an assistant of sorts.

#### *Frankenstein Created Woman* (1966)

Hans (#2) is an assistant to Dr. Hertz and helps with various experiments in the lab. Both are assistants to the Baron. Though Hertz is a physician (“for the past 30 years”, says the Baron) he is poorly informed and does not question anything the Baron says or does. Hertz is constantly befuddled and prefers his alcohol. If Hertz is substandard then this begs the question of how did Victor and Hertz meet and why are they working together?

Regarding Hans, who is falsely accused of murder, the Baron states quite simply, “I’ve known the accused (Hans) for several months and that I’ve always found him to be trustworthy, diligent, keen witted, if not over intelligent, conscientious, abstemious, and wholly reliable.” All good qualifications for an effective and valuable lab assistant.

In this film the Baron’s hands have been damaged so he is unable to perform any delicate operations. Instead, he has Hertz do the operations under his direction. After the operation on Christina, Hertz says to the Baron, “My handiwork but your brain” and later to Christina, “the hands were mine but the skill was his.” All good signs of a valuable assistant.

#### *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969)

Karl (#2) is a practicing physician and the Baron is using blackmail to get Karl to assist him in his lab work (making another monster). Karl has been illegally dealing in narcotics and the Baron is using this to seek Karl’s help. The Baron uses extortion to get loyalty.

Soon, Karl and the Baron are in search of another head/brain and ultimately Karl kills a night watchman (“I didn’t mean to”). Karl continues to go down the criminal rabbit hole and the Baron appears to be the enabler. Both the Baron and Karl are fugitives of the law. The Baron continues to extort Karl for his own purposes of creating another monster. The Baron and Karl kidnap (“removed”) a patient to use for their creation. The Baron comments, “I have seriously broken the law”, recognizing the predicament he is in with his work.

Demonstrating his skills Karl assists the Baron in transplanting a brain. The Baron comments, "Remember, Doctor Knox had Burke and Hare to assist him. Think what they did for surgery between them. Now I have you." The Baron is rationalizing illegal behavior to advance science and Karl is implicit in this. Karl is not only assisting in surgery but also the associated lab work necessary as support for the monster.

Anna, Karl's fiancée, is a general helper (gets coffee) around the lab, lies on their behalf, and helps the Baron, Karl, and the monster escape. This is not really loyalty to the Baron but rather love for Karl.

#### *Horror of Frankenstein (1970)*

In this film the Baron is played by Ralph Bates and not Peter Cushing. The Baron has a single minded focus and will not let anything or anyone get in his way. He even has his father killed so he can inherit his estate to be able to purchase scientific equipment to continue his experiments.

The Baron has his assistant, Wilhelm, who helps him set up the lab, uncreate boxes, and set up equipment. Wilhelm asks, "What exactly is our work?" Victor responds, "Research (into) life." Wilhelm's question is troublesome since it implies he does not know what he is doing. If so, then why was he 'hired' as a lab assistant? Couldn't the Baron find a more appropriate assistant?

In addition to Wilhelm Victor also has his friendly neighborhood grave robber. He does as instructed and is loyal to the Baron, as long as he get paid and paid well.

#### *Frankenstein and the Monster From Hell (1973)*

The Baron's main assistant, Dr. Simon Helder, is complicit in acquiring fresh bodies. Helder experiments on body parts in an attempt to emulate the Baron. The police discover these experiments and Helder is sent to a psychiatric prison, coincidentally the same place where the Baron, now known as Dr. Karl Victor, works.

Upon their meeting, Helder says to the Baron, "I've studied all your published works. I've even performed some of your experiments, without much success". With this background the Baron treats Helder more as a colleague than an assistant. To further their work Helder says to the Baron, "create a new man" with all the "bits and pieces".

During a surgical procedure Helder assists and does the work with his hands while the Baron directs (the Baron's hands were mangled by fire and useless for delicate surgery). Helder takes on the responsibilities and duties of an effective and efficient lab assistant in his various work with the Baron.

It should also be noted that Sarah, a "mute", does some assistance around the lab (she eventually talks).

### Ranking of lab assistants

Who is the best? Worst? Most reliable? Most helpful? Best to be located in an isolated castle lab with? Based on their scores in the Table for Universal it appears that Fritz, Karl, and Ygor are the least qualified lab assistants with the lowest scores (it is noted that both characters, Fritz and Karl, are played by Dwight Frye) whereas Mannering appears to be the best qualified with the highest score. For the Hammer films it appears Kleve is the best qualified whereas Hans from FCW has the lowest score, which is still higher than the four lowest from Universal.

Based on the relative scores shown in the Table the average for Universal lab assistants is 28 whereas the average for Hammer lab assistants is 30.3, slightly higher. It is Fritz, Karl, and Ygor who bring down the average for Universal. If we eliminate these three low scores from the Universal tally the average then becomes 31.2, higher than Hammer. Overall, based on these numbers, the Universal lab assistants, excluding Fritz, Karl, and Ygor, appear to be better suited and trained than the Hammer lab assistants. Just about all of the lab assistants, irrespective of the studio, are well trained. [Universal: 14 assistants, 392 total score = 28.0 average; for 11 assistants (excluding Fritz, Karl, & Ygor) = 31.2 average score; Hammer: 11 assistants, 329 total score = 29.9 average score]

### Inquiring minds want to know

How long was Fritz working with Henry before the monster's creation? Also, how long was Karl working for Pretorius before the events in the film? Pretorius clearly had influence over Karl and what is the reason? Karl committed a no-questions-asked murder (to get a fresh heart, "a police case") from orders by Pretorius so there must be some sort of history between those two for him to so readily commit a felony.

### Fritz vs Krempe

For the first film in each studio franchise it is interesting to compare Fritz and Krempe. Fritz is unskilled, is more of a lackey helper, and is demeaned and bullied, whereas Krempe is a real colleague, associate, and partner and treated as an equal. If their roles were exchanged there is no way Fritz could do the work and help for Victor and Krempe would have no problem helping Henry and probably make useful suggestions and improvements.

The key difference however is Fritz is loyal to the end and would not snitch on Henry whereas Krempe, with serious ethical issues, wanted to go to the authorities for what Victor has been doing. Loyalty does have its value over knowledge.

Wilmshurst Generator

An exclusive in the Hammer film cannon, the Wilmshurst generator, is a device used to generate electrical power. The device consists of two circular glass or plastic plates lined with copper that rotate against each other creating a current. Though the device size varied some in film to film it is used to create electrical energy to power the Baron's experiments. Though the generator can be cranked by hand Hammer lab technology had advanced enough that the generator was operated by batteries.

### **Summary**

In total the Universal Studio Frankenstein films have a few more lab assistants than the Hammer films and both studios coincidentally produced their Frankenstein films over a 17 year period, Universal from 1931 to 1948 and Hammer from 1957 to 1974. For the most part in the early films of the series those lab assistants in the Universal films were less skilled than those in the Hammer films. So unskilled were they, especially Fritz and Karl, that questions abound under what circumstances they met Henry and were 'hired'.

Though lab assistants are indeed important we must not forget the single minded tenacity of Henry and Victor (and their gang) in their quest to initially make a man from many parts and subsequently use him to further their careers and quest for knowledge.

The lab assistants who scored lowest were those of Henry and include Fritz and Karl (not sure about helper Ludwig). Ygor is also very close to those bottom rungs though he is with Wolf and not Henry. Those who have middle scores include Benson, Daniel, and Hammer Karl. Those who received the highest scores include, Pretorius, Mannering, Mornay, and Kleve, all trained physicians. And so goes it in the real world of biomedical science where there are those lab assistants who have minimal education and therefore minimal duties as well as those who are highly educated and many key duties and responsibilities. Even so, this too demonstrates what also goes on in the real world of biomedical science where those poorly trained seemingly oftentimes make significant contributions to the lab work sometimes more than experienced lab assistants. Of all the Frankenstein lab assistants, Universal or Hammer, the most loyal, experienced, and skillful must be Dr. Hans Kleve.

One note I feel important to bring up. In the CoF film Victor was home schooled and in that film he never did receive a medical degree from a University. Though he has the title, Baron, he would be called, Mr. Frankenstein. In the immediate sequel, RoF, and all others following, Victor is now referred to as Dr. Frankenstein. When and where did he receive his medical degree?

Thank you for reading. It's back to the lab for me. Stay healthy and eat right.

Table (1=low; 5=high)

Lab assistant	Film*	Prior experience	Responsibilities	Requirements	Skill set	Communication skills	Loyalty	Education	Work ethic	Total
<b>UNIVERSAL</b>										
Fritz	F	0	2	1	2	2	5	0	3	15
Pretorius	BoF	5	4	4	5	4	2	5	5	34
Karl	BoF	1	2	2	2	2	4	1	3	17
Ygor	SoF	1	2	2	2	3	3	0	3	16
Benson	SoF	4	3	4	3	4	5	3	4	30
Kettering	GoF	4	3	3	4	4	4	5	4	31
Bohmer	GoF	5	4	4	5	4	2	5	4	33
Mannering	FMW	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	35
Niemann	HoF	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	33
Daniel	HoF	2	3	3	2	3	5	1	3	22
Nina	HoD	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	31
Miliza	HoD	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Mornay	A&C	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	34
Stevens	A&C	4	3	3	4	3	3	5	4	29
<b>HAMMER</b>										
Krempe	CoF	4	5	4	4	4	2	4	4	31
Kleve	RoF	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	36
Karl	RoF	3	3	3	3	4	5	2	4	27
Hans	EoF	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	4	31
Zoltan	EoF	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	3	23
Hans #2	FCW	3	3	3	3	3	5	2	3	25
Hertz	FCW	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	34
Karl #2	FMBD	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	33
Wilhelm	HofF	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	31
graverobber	HofF	4	3	4	4	3	4	2	4	28
Helder	FMFH	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	35

\*F=Frankenstein; BoF=Bride of Frankenstein; SoF=Son of Frankenstein; GoF=Ghost of Frankenstein; FMW=Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man; HoF=House of Frankenstein; HoD=House of Dracula; A&C=Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein; CoF=Curse of Frankenstein; RoF=Revenge of Frankenstein; EoF=Evil of Frankenstein; FCW=Frankenstein Created Woman; FMBD=Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed; HofF=Horror of Frankenstein; FMFH=Frankenstein and the Monster From Hell