



A MODERN PROMETHEUS

A game for 2 players

A MODERN PROMETHEUS

A Roleplaying Game for 2 Players about Gothic Horror,
Dark Science, and Creating Monsters

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Quotations from:

Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus,

by Mary Shelley, 1818 (2013) / Penguin Classics

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein,

dir. Kenneth Branagh, 1994 / TriStar Pictures

Jekyll & Hyde: The Gothic Musical Thriller,

Frank Wildhorn, Leslie Bricusse & Steve Cuden (writers),
1990 (1995)

I respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people and the
Boon Wurrung / Bunurong people of the Kulin Nations
as the traditional owners of the land on which the majority
of my work takes place. I pay respects to elders past and
present. Sovereignty was never ceded.

In each of us, there are two natures....

... this primitive duality of man—good and evil...

... It is the curse of mankind that these polar twins
should be constantly struggling.

—Dr. Henry Jekyll, from *Jekyll & Hyde: The
Gothic Musical Thriller*



A MONSTER OUR WALKS STREETS

Imagine a city. Cobbled streets running between buildings of stone as veins wrap around bone. The wealthy throw their lavish parties, convinced of their goodness by their fortune and wealth, while the poor toil and ply their trades for pennies. At the heart of this city lies the university, the locus of the pursuit of knowledge—of truth!—for the whole region. Philosophy, natural history, sciences, and studies that skirt the edges of the respectable. Lecturers shape the promising young minds of the generation while students scour the library for the overlooked morsels of genius that will give them a suitable leg up over their peers. And, in an isolated laboratory, a particular scientist pursues dark knowledge that pushes beyond what we conceive to understand of the natural sciences—pushing the boundaries into truly new frontiers. That scientist is I. This is the moment of my greatest triumph, and my deepest tragedy.

PLAYING THE GAME

A *Modern Prometheus* tells the story of a scientist and their creation, born of eldritch sciences and dark secrets. This is a game for 2 players. Together you will tell the story of the Scientist and their Creation as the two of them grapple with despair, hope, and their own humanity.

THIS IS A STORYTELLING GAME. Use the minigame rules to tell a story that you both enjoy. There is no winner, and no loser, only the pleasure of collaborative storytelling. **THE AIM IS TO DISCOVER THROUGH PLAY WHO IS HUMAN, AND WHO IS MONSTROUS.** Feel free to add conversations and scenes in between minigames, and hold conversations about the story and where you would like it to go next. Speak about the story at both the scene-to-scene level, and the overarching meta level. **YOU ARE THE CHARACTERS, THE WRITERS, AND THE AUDIENCE OF THE STORY.** Make something you enjoy.

To play you will need a stack of coins, a 4-sided dice and a 6-sided dice, and some

tokens. It is also recommended to have something to write on, and something to write with.

Play is divided into turns. On your turn, choose one minigame to play. Turn to the relevant page and read the instructions for that minigame together. Each minigame is different, and tells a different part of your shared story. You may play minigames more than once if you choose, and you do not have to play all the minigames during a single story.

Minigames will reward coins when you hit certain markers. Keep your coins until the end of the game. The coins you collect from minigames are not the same as tokens you might gain during games, or coins you might flip (throw) during minigames. If a minigame asks you to award a coin based on the other player's actions or answers be fair, but be generous.

BEGINNING THE GAME

Choose one player to be the **SCIENTIST**. The other player is the **CREATION**.

Begin the game by playing **CREATING MONSTERS** on page 12. Then take in turns choosing a minigame to play from your list. When both players agree, play **THE FINAL CONFRONTATION** on page 36 to end the game.

Many minigames will ask you questions at the start of the game that are separate from the lists and rules of the game. These questions usually help define characters for the scene other than the Scientist and the Creation. These are referred to as Non-Player Characters, although someone still needs to play them to bring them to life. Answer the questions collaboratively. If there is any dispute, the player taking on the Non-Player Character's role makes the final decision.

SCIENTIST MINIGAMES

- Front the Board of Ethics, page 14
- The Masquerade, page 16
- Receive a Letter, page 18
- Make A Desperate Enquiry, page 20
- Steal Time with a Confidant, page 22

CREATION MINIGAMES

- Seek Humanity, page 26
- Hunt through the Streets, page 28
- Evade Pursuers, page 30
- Stalk the Creator's Confidant, page 32
- Deliver a Demand, page 34

PROMPTS, QUESTIONS, CHALLENGES

Each minigame has a series of questions to help you tell a story together. Many questions are vague, and open to interpretation—more is implied than stated. There is no wrong way to interpret a question, as long as both players agree. Ask your partner for their input. When in doubt, follow whatever idea is most interesting to you, the outcome you would most like to explore. The same goes when you are called upon to make a decision; do whatever is most interesting, whatever pushes the story in directions you are interested in exploring.

EXPRESS YOUR PERSPECTIVE

A Modern Prometheus is a game about learning about the characters. Each minigame gives opportunities for the players to make observations and statements about their own character, and their partner's character. These statements *may or may not be true*: they only reflect the perceptions of the character making the statement. If your partner makes an observation about your character that you disagree with, it is an opportunity to explore that aspect of your character and choose to embrace the statement, or refute it. The way the Scientist sees themselves is not the same as the way their Creation sees them, and one, both, or neither of those perceptions may be how the audience (you) see them.

PLAYER SAFETY

Don't forget to consider safety tools for your game, so that you can ensure everyone has the best possible time playing. For a free kit of tools for all your games, visit bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit, with thanks to Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. Also visit twitter.com/TTRPGSafetyKit.

Start your game by establishing **LINES AND VEILS** with your partner. **LINES** are hard limits on content, things that must not appear in play. **VEILS** are soft limits, things that might appear in play, but will not be the focus of scenes or described in detail, they will take place 'behind a veil' or 'off-screen'. Lines and veils can be adjusted on the fly during play. For this game, ensure

that you and your partner are on the same page on these topics in particular, and place any lines or veils as required: violence, body horror, and sex/intimacy.

When posing challenges and asking questions, both players have the right to request a different prompt at any time. You don't need to provide a reason. If you need to, work together to craft an entirely new prompt.

PRINCIPLES

I. EMBRACE THE VICTORIAN MELODRAMA...

Swoon, rage, throw a glass of brandy into the fire,
take to your bed for days at a time

II. MAKE HUMANITY MONSTROUS AND THE MONSTROUS HUMAN...

Find the ugly side of the beautiful, and the beautiful
side of ugliness

III. MAKE YOUR FEELINGS CLEAR AND LEAVE YOUR ACTIONS UP TO INTERPRETATION...

Centre your emotional world and leave no doubt as to
your thoughts and feelings

IV. GO BEYOND THE PROMPT...

Describe the story as much or as little as you like, never
feel limited by the brevity of the prompt

V. EXPLORE, CHALLENGE, AND REFUTE...

You don't have to agree with your partner's perception of your
character, and you should show them why they're wrong

VI. PLAY TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS...

CREATING MONSTERS

A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me.

No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs.

—Victor Frankenstein, from *Frankenstein*

On a moonlit night, in the heart of a noble city, an unholy act took place, and a creature unlike any the world has ever seen was born of dark science and the untempered pursuit of knowledge that would be better forgotten.

BOTH PLAY. Take turns asking questions. Your opposite will answer you truthfully. Record the answers. Ask these questions in the sequence they are written in, then each player asks any one question from the bonus list. The game ends after both players have asked a question from the bonus list.

QUESTIONS

- **SCIENTIST ASKS**, You come alive in my workshop, born of my invention, my intent. Your eyes fix on me. What do you see?
- **CREATION ASKS**, I rise and stagger to the floor of your laboratory. The hiss and thump of your devices surrounds us. You inspect me. What do you see?
- **SCIENTIST ASKS**, You look around my laboratory, observing papers tacked to the walls, bookshelves overflowing with books and notes; all the signs of a singular obsession that I have created you to fulfil. What is it that I want?
- **CREATION ASKS**, You raise your hand to your mouth, shocked at what you have wrought. I am imbued with abilities far beyond those of a natural human. What unnatural strengths do I possess?
- **SCIENTIST ASKS**, Why do you hate me?
- **CREATION ASKS**, Why do you fear me?

BONUS QUESTIONS

- I rise to approach you. How do you respond?
- I attempt to flee. Do you stop me?
- I reach out to touch you. May I?
- You ask me a question. What is it?

FRONT BOARD OF THE ETHICS

News of my experiments had reached the ears of the upper echelons of science in the city, and I was called to answer for my actions to the Board of the University, those pompous fools who thought to limit my inquiry to their narrow understanding of truth.

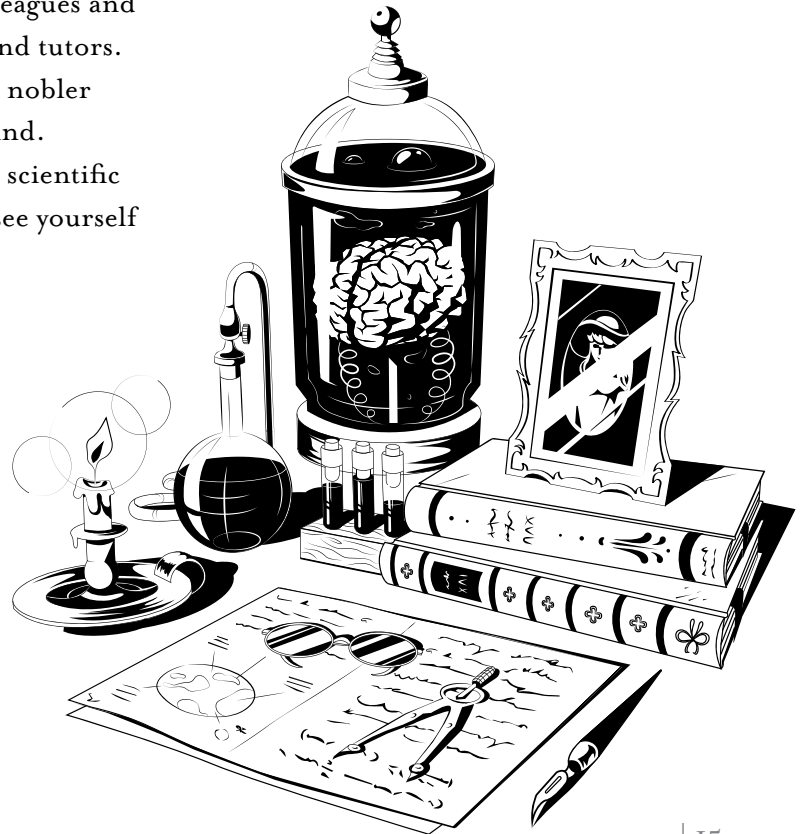
SCIENTIST PLAYS. The Creation takes the role of the members of the Board of Ethics, and any other Non-Player Characters in the scene. Who are they? How are they disposed towards the Scientist?

The Board poses at least two challenges to the Scientist, who must respond.

The game ends when the Board has no more challenges that they want to pose. If the Scientist answers to the Board's satisfaction, the Board presents the Scientist with a coin.

CHALLENGES

- Explain what you hoped to achieve by your actions, and how the benefits outweighed the risks.
- Explain why you believed you had exhausted all other options in your pursuit of your goal, and why this was the only course of action available to you.
- Justify why you alienated your colleagues and refused to consult your mentors and tutors.
- Explain how your actions served a nobler purpose, for the good of humankind.
- Express your frustrations with the scientific community and explain how you see yourself in relation.



THE MASQUERADE

The wealthy and the educated passed their time in extravagance, exchanging gossip and favours behind masks and lace fans, not knowing the evil that walked their streets and darkened their halls.

SCIENTIST PLAYS. The Creation takes the role of the Socialite and other Non-Player Characters in the scene. Who are they? The Socialite can become a different character at any time as the masquerade progresses.

The Scientist and the Socialite take turns exchanging rumours with another, beginning with the Scientist. When the Scientist gives a rumour, it can be about any character in the game. When the Socialite gives a rumour, it must be something they have heard about the Scientist, their work, their companions, or their family.

The game ends after at least two rumours each. If the Socialite is intrigued or delightfully scandalised by the Scientist, they present the Scientist with a coin.

Fine party, divine party
A touch tarty, but stinkin' rich!

Dee-licious, and so vicious!
Our one wish is to
Bitch, bitch, bitch!

—Party Guests, from *Jekyll & Hyde:
The Gothic Musical Thriller*

QUESTIONS

- I have heard that _____ performs twisted acts under the cover of darkness. Is this true?
- I have heard that _____ is broke and living off the wealth of a mysterious benefactor. Is this true?
- I have heard that _____ is having an affair below their station. Is this true?
- I have heard that _____ is haunted by traumas in their past, and wakes in cold sweat during the night. Is this true?
- I have heard that _____ conspired to perform a dastardly crime. Is this true?
- I have heard that _____ is in love with someone they can never be with. Is this true?
- I have heard that _____ has an addiction that is slowly ruining them. Is this true?
- I have heard that _____ is / has / does _____. Is this true?

RECEIVE A LETTER

A letter arrived at my lodgings, sealed and signed in a familiar hand, bearing tidings of the world beyond the city that is blissfully ignorant of the dark undertakings that have consumed my mind these past months.

SCIENTIST PLAYS. The Creation takes the role of the Correspondent. Who are they? How long has it been since they have corresponded with the Scientist?

Place a 6-sided die on the table, with the 3 face up, representing the Scientist's hope. Adjust the current hope value based on the story so far. The Correspondent reads the letter to the Scientist in order as written, and the Scientist responds. When asked to throw, flip a coin.

The game ends at the end of the letter. If the Scientist's hope is 5 or more, the Scientist takes a coin. If hope ever reaches zero, stop reading immediately and the game ends.

THE LETTER

- Salutations and greetings to you. Throw. On heads, my words fill you with joy: increase hope. On tails, my greeting wracks you with guilt and distress: decrease hope.
- I tell you a story of your home, or friends you have not seen in years. Throw. On heads, the story is a boon to your spirit: increase hope. On tails, the story is tragic news you had not heard: decrease hope.
- I write of the rumours that swirl around you, concerned for your wellbeing. Throw. On heads, the rumours bear no resemblance to your current circumstances, and are easily dismissed: increase hope. On tails, the horrific truth of your present occurrences cuts into your soul: decrease hope.
- I beg you for some assurance of your safety and good health. Throw. On heads, I ask you to perform an action you can achieve: increase hope. On tails, my request is impossible: decrease hope.
- I sign off with news that I am on my way to visit you. Throw. On heads, I will arrive shortly: increase hope. On tails, I will arrive in many weeks, and you fear you may not be able to welcome me: decrease hope.

MAKE A DESPERATE ENQUIRY

My creation was loose, stalking through the city at night, burning with some unspeakable devilish purpose. Desperate to undo my mistake and rid the world of this abomination, I sought out every scrap of information I could about the creature, its movements, its actions. Somewhere I would find the key that would allow me to destroy it utterly.

SCIENTIST PLAYS. The Creation takes the role of the Witness. The Witness becomes a different character in between each statement. Who are they? What have they heard of the Scientist, and what do they think?

At the start of the game, the Scientist chooses two different numbers between 1 and 4, inclusive. Write them down. After each statement, the Scientist rolls a 4-sided dice. If the result matches one of the chosen numbers, cross it off.

The Witness gives statements to the Scientist, which the Scientist answers. The game ends after four statements. If the Scientist has marked both of the numbers chosen at the start of the game, they take a coin.

STATEMENTS

- I saw the Creation two nights ago, hunched under a heavy cloak and walking along the canal. What was it up to?
- I heard that the Creation broke into a home and terrorised the inhabitants. What did it want?
- My kids found the Creation lurking under a bridge down the road. What was it doing there?
- I have heard stories about similar creatures to this. They can be killed in a specific way. Do you know how?
- Yesterday morning the university librarian found the Creation among the bookshelves. What was it seeking?
- Small objects have gone missing around the neighbourhood. Simple things, like kettles, pans, and clothes. What does the Creation want with them?
- There are rumours that you created this thing. What are you going to do to stop it?
- The papers are reporting disappearances across the city; people, children, animals. Is this the Creation's doing?
- I saw the Creation doing _____. What does it mean?

STEAL
A TIME WITH
A CONFIDANT

In the past their presence had been my greatest comfort, my anchor when stormy moods overtook me, and my guiding light in moments of uncertainty. Now, with my dark shame heavy on my soul, I was undone by their presence.

SCIENTIST PLAYS. The Creation takes the role of the Confidant. Who are they? What have they heard, and what do they believe?

Take turns asking questions from the list below, starting with the Confidant.

The game ends when either player passes, making some comment about the weather or food. The Scientist receives a coin if the Confidant answers 'yes' to any question.

QUESTIONS

- We have been apart for many months. Have you thought well of me in that time?
- I tell you stories of people that you have not seen for months. Do you care?
- I want to share the turmoil of my mind with you. Will you listen without judgement?
- I try to tell you how I feel about you. Do you feel the same way?
- I ask you to tell me something you care about. Do you?
- I make you a promise. Do you accept it?
- I ask you if you trust me. Do you?
- I take your hand. May I?
- I touch your face. May I?
- I lean in to kiss you. May I?

It is true, we shall be monsters,
cut off from all the world;

but on that account we shall be more
attached to one another.

—The creature, from *Frankenstein*



SEEK HUMANITY

I am alone in the world, the only one of my kind, discarded by my creator. But there is good in the world, and if I can find it, perhaps I too may know a modicum of peace amidst my cursed existence.

CREATION PLAYS. The Scientist takes the role of an Innocent. Who are they? Where does this interaction take place?

The Innocent holds a stack of tokens, and asks four questions from the list below. After each question, the Innocent secretly places one token in either a Human stack or a Monster stack. After the Innocent has finished asking questions, the Innocent reveals the stacks and the Creation chooses either Human or Monster and rolls a 4-sided die. If the result is below or equal to the number in the chosen stack, the Creation takes a coin.

QUESTIONS

- What life do you desire?
- What is beautiful, and what is ugly?
- What does it mean to be strong?
- What does it mean to be weak?
- Who is your creator?
- What is your purpose?
- What is the purpose of humankind?
- What do you see when you look at me?

I do know that for the sympathy of one living being, I would make peace with all.

I have love in me the likes of which you can scarcely imagine and rage the likes of which you would not believe.

If I cannot satisfy the one, I will indulge the other.

—The creature, from *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*

HUNT THROUGH

THE STREETS

I stalk through the streets, face hidden from those who come and go, blissful and peaceful, unaware how close they stand to me, and the darkness that consumes me. I search, desperate, for the one I seek among these twisted streets.

CREATION PLAYS. Choose your target. It can be any character, including the Scientist. The Scientist takes the role of the Target.

The Creation poses up to three challenges to the Target, and the target can choose to push on or give up and allow themselves to be captured. When asked to throw, flip a coin.

The game ends after three challenges. If the Target has not been caught, they escape. If the Creation catches the Target, the Creation receives a coin and the Target poses the Final Challenge.

CHALLENGES

- I stalk you from the shadows, slipping like a wraith between alleyways, door frames, and across rooftops. Do you notice my presence? If so, throw. On tails, you spy me too late, and I catch you.
- I follow you into a crowd, where you attempt to blend in and lose me in the throng. Do you point me out to the citizens to cause a panic? If so, throw. On heads, the surge of people moving in panic allows you to put distance between us, and the next time I might catch you, I don't.
- I force you into a narrow alleyway, littered with obstacles. Do you proceed? If so, throw. On tails, you stumble and fall, and I catch you.
- I chase you through an empty street, our feet pounding loudly on the cobbles. Do you attempt to outrun me? If so, throw. On tails, I am faster, and catch you.
- I corral you up to a sheer drop. Do you leap? If so, throw. On tails, you land badly, and I catch you.
- I double back, take another route, and emerge from an unexpected angle, surprising you. Throw. On tails, I startle you enough to catch you.

FINAL CHALLENGE

- I am at your mercy. What do you do?



EVADE PURSUERS

I was never meant to exist in this cruel world, and the small minds of humankind reject me. Feared and loathed, I was hunted through the city streets, seeking sanctuary for slim moments crouched in gutters and under bridges. But those who hated me pursued me ever onwards.

CREATION PLAYS. The Scientist takes the role of the Hunter. Who leads the hunting party? Why do they pursue the Creation?

Place a stack of tokens on the table. The Hunter takes two, the Creation takes none. Begin with a coin throw. On heads, the Creation has the initiative. On tails, the Hunter has the initiative. The player with the initiative poses a challenge. After each challenge, throw again. Challenges can be repeated.

The game ends after either player makes their fourth challenge, and the Creation rolls a 4-sided dice. If the result is under the number of tokens you hold, you gain a coin. If the Hunter is reduced to zero tokens at any time, the game ends immediately and the Creation gains a coin.

CHALLENGES

- I use the terrain to my advantage, flanking you and taking you by surprise. You discard a token.
- I charge through a nearby building, scattering objects in my path. I gain a token.
- I take an opportunity to confront you head on. You discard a token.
- I attempt to hide, disguising myself in an alley. I gain a token.
- I appear in your vision as lightning crashes overhead, filling you with fear. You discard a token.
- I use an object to distract or mislead you. I gain a token.
- I force you into a location that benefits me. You discard a token.
- I scurry below the streets, wading through the muck and grime. I gain a token.

STALK THE CREATOR'S CONFIDANT

My creator's vain selfishness gives them little concern for others, but at least one holds a special place in my blasted parent's heart. Through them, I reasoned, I could strike at my creator.

CREATION PLAYS. The Scientist takes the role of their Confidant. Who are they? Where are they when they encounter the Creation?

The Confidant takes a stack of tokens to represent their fear of the Creation. Fear begins at 0. The Creation makes four challenges, which the Confidant answers. After each challenge is answered the Confidant increases fear by 1, and then rolls a 4-sided dice. If they roll below fear, they flee from the Creation's presence. If fear reaches 3, the Creation takes a coin. If the Creation makes all 4 challenges without the Confidant fleeing, the Creation makes one Final Challenge. The game ends after the Final Challenge, or if the Confidant flees.

CHALLENGES

- I uncover my face, revealing my entire visage to you. Do you recoil? Take fear.
- I ask you about the Scientist. What do you tell me? Take fear.
- You have a token of the Scientist's affection on your person. May I inspect it? Take fear.
- I want to tell you about my experience, and the turmoil of my mind. Will you listen without judgement? Take fear.
- I curse the Scientist and all they have done to me. Do you rebuke me? Take fear.
- I ask you for a boon or a gift. Do you give it? Take fear.
- I take your hand. May I? Take fear.
- I touch your face. May I? Take fear.

FINAL CHALLENGE

- I attack you.
- I horrify you.
- I enthrall you.
- I disappear.

DELIVER A DEMAND

I lure you, my creator, to a place of my choosing, to make a demand: a boon to begin to make up for the cruelty you inflicted in my creation. For despite your efforts, selfish as they be, I remain... incomplete.

BOTH PLAY. Where does this confrontation take place? Seeing one another once more, what do you each notice about your opposite?

The Creation begins by making a demand of the Scientist. The demand must be within the Scientist's power to provide, but should not be simple or easy to accomplish. The Scientist chooses to respond with one of,

- I agree to do this.
- I will do this thing, but first you... / if you agree to...
- I will not do this thing you ask of me, begone! (the game ends)

If the Scientist poses a condition of their own, the Creation chooses to make one of the same responses. If they add another condition, the Scientist again chooses a response, and so on. Continue in this way until an agreement is reached, or the deal collapses.

If an agreement is reached, the Creation takes a coin. If the Scientist delivers on the agreement, now or at any future time, they gain a coin too.

We finally stand face to face, the events of the last months heavy on our minds.

The scars we have inflicted on each other on our hearts, the sky above us stormy and laden with portent.

We will not both return from this, not in the way we may hope.

BOTH PLAY. Describe your surroundings. How did you come to be here? Who chose this location? Observe one another. What do you notice about your opposite?

Count the coins that you have won from the other minigames. Spend coins one for one to make any of the challenges below, taking turns. Challenges can be repeated. The game ends when one player admits defeat and poses the Final Challenge, or when all coins are spent. Narrate an epilogue that satisfies both players.


THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

CHALLENGES

- I draw a pistol, concealed in my travelling clothes, and take aim. Do you avoid my shot, or do I strike you?
- I lash out with a fist, connecting solidly with your jaw. Do you fall to the ground, or recover?
- I lift you bodily and we both tumble to the ground. Do you struggle free, or are you pinned?
- I scream an accusation at you, drawing on a well of white-hot hatred. Do you respond, or do you ignore me?
- I cry to the uncaring heavens, roaring of the injustices I have suffered at your hands. Do you respect my anguish, or do you mock me?
- I signal allies, hidden out of sight, to join the fray. Do you strike them down, or avoid doing them harm?
- I break away, attempting to flee. Do you catch me, or let me go?
- I lure you to a trap I have prepared in advance. Do you fall for it, or avoid it?
- I break your line of sight for a moment, allowing me to strike from an unexpected angle. Do you take the hit, or deflect my strike?
- I hammer you with my strongest blows, roaring with rage. Do you succumb, or withstand my assault?
- I do _____. Can you survive / dodge / endure / hold me off?

FINAL CHALLENGE

- You have me at your mercy. Do you strike me down?



I am alone and miserable.

Only someone as ugly as I am could love me.

—The creature, from *Frankenstein*

EXPANDED RULES

3+ PLAYERS

You can expand your game of *A Modern Prometheus* to be played with 3 or more players. On a player's turn, that player should choose a minigame from either the Scientist's or the Creation's list. The current player takes the role in bold in the game description. Next, choose which player should take the other role, and what character (if any) the remaining player(s) should take.

CREATING MONSTERS: Take turns asking and answering questions around the table, asking each question in turn. Each player may play both the Scientist and Creation at different points in the game. Or, choose two players to play on behalf of the group.

FRONT THE BOARD OF ETHICS: All the players who are not the Scientist can play different members of the Board. A coin is awarded to the Scientist based on a simple

majority vote of the Board, with ties resulting in no coin.

ATTEND THE MASQUERADE: All the players who are not the Scientist can play different guests at the ball. A coin is awarded to the Scientist based on a simple majority vote of the Socialites, with ties granting the Scientist a coin.

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION: Take turns posing challenges around the table, alternating which character is making the challenge each time. Each player may play both the Scientist and Creation at different points in the game. Every player should agree if it is time for a character to admit defeat. Or, choose two players to play on behalf of the group. Ensure all players are included in crafting the epilogue. Ensure all players are included in crafting the epilogue.

