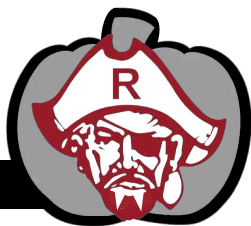


# The Buccaneer

Red Bank Regional H.S. / Student Newspaper / Oct. 31, 2023



## Stories behind the scares

BY EASY JACK PORTMAN

You know their menacing monikers and frightening faces, but are you familiar with the backstories of your favorite boogeymen? *The Buccaneer's* resident researcher digs into film fiends' ominous origins.

SEE PAGE 17

## Do all 'classics' merit cults?

BY ROWAN MARTIN

Halloween is just as much about cinematic scares as it is about candy and costumes, but do the so-called classics of the silver screen still resonate with today's viewers? One RBR cinephile tested some time-honored titles.

SEE PAGE 4

**GUEST WRITER | Anonymous RBR Author**

## *Frozen Cardinal: Obscura*

*Eat your tell-tale heart out, Edgar Allan Poe! This story comes from an RBR writer who recently found his voice as an author of spine-tingling stories perfect for this spooky season. The full work will be serialized on The Buccaneer's new website, set to launch with the November edition.*

Dec. 7, 2017

Dear Gerry,

It's been a month, and the base still hasn't arrived.

Gerry, if I'm really honest with you, this place ... it consumes me with dread and terror. In the

SEE PAGE 21



## Spooky season brings a creepy crop of critters to the halls of RBR

CREATED BY JULES STAUB &  
ILLUSTRATED SAM MARTINEZ

### TEMPERATURE TERROR

Is your classroom too hot? Too cold?  
The temperature terror is to blame!

### COFFEE CREATURE

If you arrive late,  
he'll snatch your  
coffee. Be on time,  
or your PSL will  
join his collection!

### I.D. DEMON

This small creature steals  
students' I.D.s!



## ELECTRIC SQUIRREL

Lurking in the trees that line the athletic fields, this evil rodent is on a permanent power trip: He has the ability to black out an entire building with a single bite!



## WIFI WITCH

This magical sorceress controls the school's wifi, making sure students can't finish their work!



# Which Halloween Hall of Famers still deliver thrills and chills?

BY ROWAN MARTIN

Two classic Halloween films were produced by Universal Studios in 1931, but that is not where the connection between the two films ends.

*Dracula* starred Bela Lugosi as the titular Count Dracula, Dwight Frye as the deranged servant Renfield and Edward Van Sloan as professor Dr. Abraham Van Helsing, a doctor.

Meanwhile, *Frankenstein* starred Colin Clive as the titular Dr. Henry Frankenstein, Dwight Frye as the deranged servant Fritz, and Edward Van Sloan as Dr. Waldman, a professor.

Both of the films conclude with (\*spoiler alert\*) the monsters meeting gruesome ends. The engaged couples at the heart of each story — Mina Seward and John Harker of



*Dracula* and Henry and Elizabeth of *Frankenstein* — spend the last moments of their respective films by each others' sides, having successfully freed themselves from their foes.

While many perplexing similarities tie these films together, I would argue that they are very distinct in execution, rendering one film far superior to the other.

*Dracula* has everything:

- Staring. Intense staring. In fact, the same closeup of Lugosi boring into the viewer's soul, recycled every 2 minutes.
- The slowest climbing of stairs I have ever witnessed, which is rivaled only by the speed it takes a vampire to bite someone in this film.
- An asylum that can't keep

CLASSICS, FROM PAGE 4

## Stares, stairs sloooow *Dracula* down

its seemingly sole resident from wandering the building.

This synopsis may be a bit harsh for a classic with cult status, so it's worth noting that there are some praiseworthy elements to this adaptation.

The mood is expertly crafted. From the first shot of a horse-drawn carriage cutting through jagged mountains; to the foreboding depths of Count Dracula's castle, where he and his wives lay in their coffins; to the elaborate, cobwebbed grand staircase hall; this film is teeming with mysterious, brooding imagery. It encapsulates the gothic style through its set and cinematography.

However, where *Dracula* falls flat is that it is simply too slow and too silent. There is a line between eerie suspense and the exhausting drag of waiting for *anything* to happen. Even at its climax, the viewer is left feeling cheated out of any kind of exhilaration.

The performances vary greatly, but two portrayals stuck out: that of the uncredited maid, played by Moon Carroll, and Frye's Renfield. The actress, who had only a few minutes of screen time, surprised me with her charm and commitment, bringing an energy to this minor character that some leads struggled to put forth.

The performance that really stole the show was Renfield. After a somewhat underwhelming start as pre-*Dracula* Mr. Renfield, Frye flipped a switch for the rest of the film. The creepiness was there, no doubt, yet he was able to do it in a way in which he didn't take himself too seriously. His was an eccentric, over-the-top kind of crazy that produced an extremely entertaining result.

Unfortunately, the few commanding performances and

SEE CLASSICS, PAGE 6

CLASSICS, FROM PAGE 5

## *Frankenstein* balances humor, heart

spooky atmosphere were not enough to save the film from a lackluster script that suffered from poor pacing and seemed to be composed of more awkward silence than dialogue.

After feeling dissatisfied with the first film, I turned my attention to its sibling.

Instantly, *Frankenstein* demonstrated its strength.

Before getting into the actual film, we open on a dapper gentleman coming onto a stage. He then proceeds to caution the viewer about the thrills and horrors yet to come. With a smile, he finally says, “Well, we’ve warned you,” and he exits. I love it.

The main section of the film opens on a tantalizingly grim scene: a burial. The ominous tone persists as we first meet Dr. Frankenstein and Fritz trying to steal a hanging corpse. Immediately, I was hooked. Rather than relying on a quiet, dark atmosphere, *Frankenstein* effectively blends action, humor

and the macabre. Where *Dracula* fails, *Frankenstein* feels dynamic and real. Even the iconic “It’s alive!” scene — a moment that could easily go wrong — delivered. Clive’s portrayal of Dr. Frankenstein was deeply moving.

The reveal of Frankenstein’s monster is undeniably iconic. Even from the perspective of a 21st-century viewer who has seen all kinds of modern special effects, I was amazed by the makeup that transformed Boris Karloff into the famous monster. The excellent performance from Karloff cannot be understated: Without his terrifying and sometimes endearing portrayal, the message of the film would have been lost.

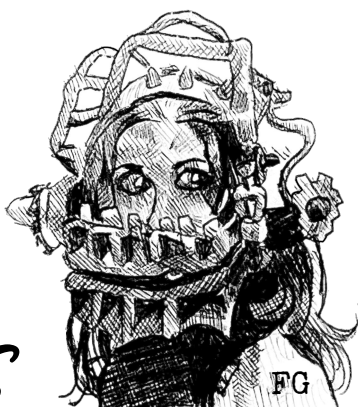
Even after my viewing, one scene lingers in my mind. It is one that clearly presents the auteurship of director James Whale. The scene lasts a few

SEE CLASSICS, PAGE 20

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED  
BY FIONA GOURLIE

# TOP 5

## *flick picks*



### BEGINNER

1. Child's Play
2. Halloween
3. Scream
4. Texas Chainsaw Massacre
5. Hellraiser

### CAMPY

1. Death Becomes Her
2. Elvira: Mistress of the Dark
3. Re-Animator
4. Bride of Chucky
5. Ginger Snaps

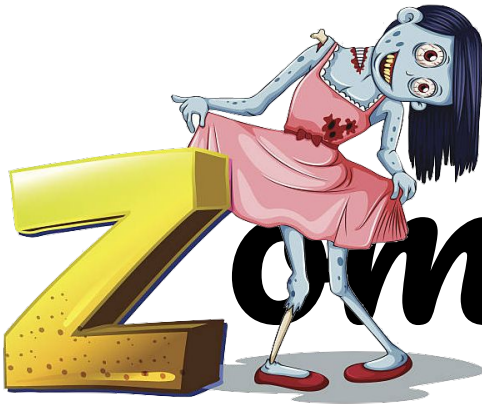
### GORY

1. Saw + Sequels
2. The Evil Dead
3. Ichi the Killer
4. Pearl
5. The House That Jack Built

### INDIE

1. The Love Witch
2. May
3. Dogtooth
4. Serial Mom
5. Lamb





# HISTORY OF Zombies

BY PLUTO RIGGLEMAN

During the Halloween season, many people think of spooky creatures, and one that comes to mind almost instantly is the zombie. Belief in the undead is a theme that has spread through many cultures.

One of the first examples of popular belief in an undead-like state comes from Haitian culture. Caribbean slaves thought of being undead as a punishment they might suffer if they tried to escape slavery by death. This myth became part of Haitian *vodou* culture before getting its grip on Hollywood in the 1960s.

*Night of the Living Dead* (1968) was the first big movie to bring the idea of the undead to popularity, but that was not the first zombie movie. In 1932,

*White Zombie* came out and is said to have inspired *Night of the Living Dead*. Then came many movies after, like *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things* (1972), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *The Evil Dead* (1981), *The Return of the Living Dead* (1985), *28 Days Later* (2002), *Land of the Dead* (2005), *Quarantine* (2008), and *World War Z* (2013). These movies have become pop culture icons that shape how people today think of the word “zombie.”

Zombies have also influenced the video game scene, with games like *The Last Of Us* (2013), *The Walking Dead* (2012), and the *Resident Evil*

SEE ZOMBIES, PAGE 9



ZOMBIES, FROM PAGE 8

## Zombie lore is constantly evolving

series, which began with the release of a PlayStation version in 1996.

Every movie, show or video game iteration puts its own twist on the zombie genre. Many works now have focused on the idea of what happens after the so-called zombie apocalypse — usually portrayed as a worldwide catastrophe that results in the zombification of a large portion of mankind — and the process of rebuilding humanity. A very unique zombie movie is *Maggie* (2015), which tells the story of a teenage girl turning into a zombie.

There are many different types of zombies that have come up in the past few years, like *The Last Of Us* — which HBO adapted into a TV series that debuted earlier this year — with its cordyceps virus zombies, or the 2009 horror/comedy film *Zombieland* with its fast-running zombies. A lot of that perceived reinvention of the zombie archetype comes from

the original roaming undead of Haitian folklore.

Whichever version of a zombie one imagines, it's undeniable that the undead have had a unique influence on pop culture and that they make for a fun, scary addition to the Halloween season.



ILLUSTRATION BY SOPHIA KURDES  
Zombie Elvis? Pop culture's obsession with the undead has produced countless variations on a legendary monster that has its roots in Caribbean slave myths.



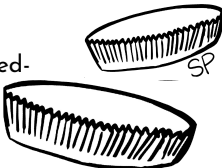
# C O N U N D R U M ?

ILLUSTRATED BY SARAH PAIR

Trick-or-treating is a thrill, but when curfew hits and your face paint begins to fade, the reality sets in that you’ve collected more candy than you can possibly consume. What to do with all that extra confectionary? Use it to ~~bribe~~ treat your favorite teacher, of course! (The end of the marking period is just around the corner, FYI.) *The Buccaneer* polled RBR faculty, staff and administrators to help you decide how best to allocate your ~~payoffs~~ gifts.

## FAVORITE: REESE’S

Some might lean Pieces like Mrs. Tedeschi or favor the limited-edition holiday shapes that Mrs. Turner and Ms. Rizzetta insist are superior to regular Reese’s, but here at RBR, the traditional peanut butter cup reigns supreme!



- |   |                         |                     |                       |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Dr. Alvarado</b>   | <b>Ms. Dorn</b>         | <b>Ms. Dorvin</b>   | <b>Mr. Frank</b>      |
| <b>Miss Garrigan</b>  | <b>Ms. Hoffman</b>      | <b>Ms. Judice</b>   | <b>Mrs. Kanuga</b>    |
| <small>The Artist Formerly Known as</small><br><b>Miss Kerber</b> | <b>Mrs. Laudermilch</b> | <b>Miss Lemus</b>   | <b>Mr. LeRoy</b>      |
| <b>Mrs. Malanowski</b>  | <b>Mrs. Maritz</b>      | <b>Ms. Matthews</b> | <b>Mrs. Matto</b>     |
| <b>Mr. Mauro</b>  | <b>Mr. McDonough</b>    | <b>Ms. McGarry</b>  | <b>Mr. McGoldrick</b> |
| <b>Mrs. Migliorino</b>  | <b>Mrs. Morris</b>      | <b>Mrs. Murphy</b>  | <b>Mrs. Ploe</b>      |
| <b>Mrs. Rosace</b>  | <b>Mrs. Sarlo</b>       | <b>Mrs. Scacco</b>  | <b>Mrs. Spencer</b>   |

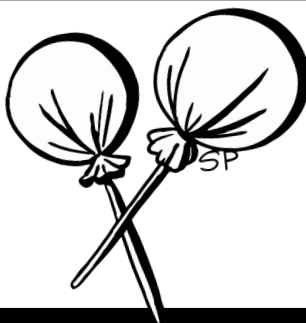
## RUNNER-UP: KITKAT


Give ‘em a break, give ‘em a break – break these folks off a piece of your KitKat bar to get on their good sides!

- |                    |                       |                       |                      |                    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Mr. Donohoe</b> | <b>Sigra Eagelton</b> | <b>Mrs. Homefield</b> | <b>Ms. Liss</b>      | <b>Mr. Mancuso</b> |
| <b>Ms. Marisol</b> | <b>Mrs. Ooms</b>      | <b>Ms. Porter</b>     | <b>Mrs. Wendland</b> | <b>Mr. Zircher</b> |

## CLASSIC CONFECTIONS

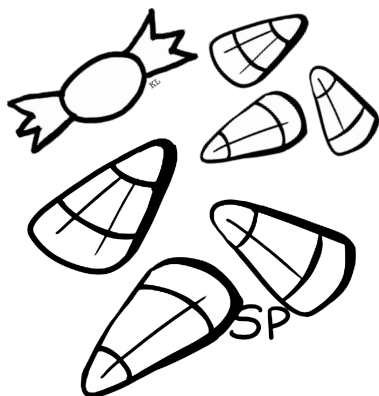
These bonbons are perennial faves, so you can probably bond with several of the educators below over your shared love of these staple sweets!



TWIX				
Dr. Burrier	Mrs. Massell	Mrs. Moylan		
Mrs. Shuff	Mrs. Spears	Ms. Valentino		
MILKY WAY				
Mrs. Bodin	Mr. Desiere	Mrs. Holland	Mrs. Pittarese (MIDNIGHT)	Mrs. Zitzman
SNICKERS				
Mrs. Barry	Mrs. Byrd	Miss Iapicco	Mrs. O'Connor	
Ms. Sarafina	Ms. Vassallo	Mrs. Verdiglione	Mrs. Young	
3 MUSKETEERS		HERSHEY'S		
John "Your Boy" DeBarberie	Ms. Finck	Mrs. Hanley	Mrs. Brennan (KISSES)	Mrs. Hansen
				Ms. Spinelli
ALMOND JOY				
Mr. Booth	Mrs. Ciallella	Mr. Martin	Dr. Mazzone	Mrs. Morrisy
MOUNDS			NESTLÉ CRUNCH	
Ms. Boyle	Mr. Clark	Ms. Pirher	Mrs. Studd	Mrs. Beckett
				Miss D'Amico
LOLLIPOPS		M&Ms		
Ms. Alber	Ms. Burton	Ms. Gutierrez	Ms. Keller	Mrs. Martinez-Reid (PEANUT)

## ODDBALLS & ONE-OFFs

These staffers have unique tastes, so be sure to save them your niche sweets!



**Mrs. Cruz**  
Everything chocolate!

**Mr. Golding**  
Whatchamacallit

**Mrs. Klatt**  
Swedish Fish

**Ms. Rosen-Haight**  
Smarties

**Ms. Thompson**  
Raisins (?!?)

**Mr. Tucker**  
Candy Corn

**Miss Desposito**  
Sour Patch Kids

**Ms. Kelterborn**  
Reese's Take 5

**Mr. Man**  
Butterfinger – full-sized!

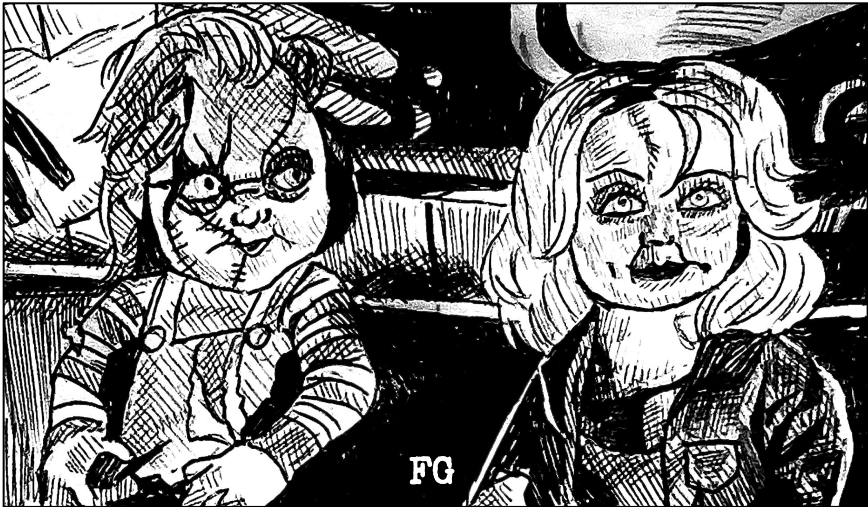
**Mr. Savarese**  
York Peppermint Patties

**Ms. Tomas**  
Whoppers

**Mr. Savarese**  
York Peppermint Patties

CHILD’S PLAY | Kira Ashton-O’Connor

1. SGTHECFOA	
2. SJAIWG	
3. LAADCUR	
4. RCLETAHEFAE	
5. YDRRGEFEDKREU	
6. ANTIFESNKRNE	
7. AELEBLNAN	
8. SEJSHOVOENARO	
9. DANPIHE	
10. ENWINEPSY	



SPOOKY SEARCH | Kira Ashton-O'Connor

S W E E T S O E Y M Z V Y N N  
H G O O G C M H F Z X N V I O  
P U O F T O N I K P M U P G T  
W Q V O S B U N R R M T B H E  
R D B E M U N A D P S X B T L  
A E U H A L L O W E E N L M E  
R R I H L U M N U Y N D O A K  
G F B E T Y R A K T Z E O R S  
D O A K I P J O E W D G D E H  
O W R Q W R O F L R I Z S S X  
G T A H W P E N U A C T U R K  
E M U T S O C E O Z A S C N N  
T H U G A I D X H P N J K H G  
B M V F Z L L Q G Q M Q E S P  
B E T I K S X O Z Z J H R X L

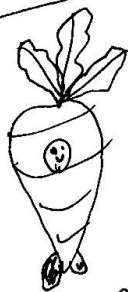
bloodsucker	boo	costume	eerie	ghoul
gruesome	Halloween	nightmare	October	pumpkin
scream	skeleton	spooky	sweets	witch

WORD SCRAMBLE  
ANSWERS  
(PAGE 12)

1. Ghostface / 2. Jigsaw / 3. Dracula / 4. Leatherface  
5. Freddy Krueger / 6. Frankenstein / 7. Annabelle  
8. Jason Voorhees / 9. Pinhead / 10. Pennywise

# DECISIONS, DECISIONS | Ash Pena-Martinez

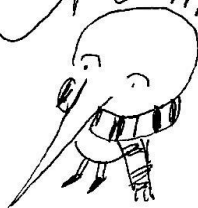
## What are YOU going to be??



A Carrot?

Mr. Worldwide  
Mr. 305?

GRUP??!

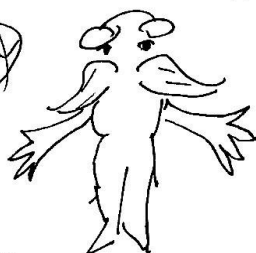


Inflatable Baby?



LOJ

The Lorax?



Smurf Cat?

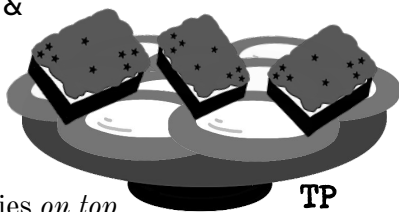
PATRICK?

# SPOOKY snacks

COMPILED BY SYDNEE BOWDEN &  
ILLUSTRATED BY TRINITY PHAM

- **PILLSBURY SUGAR COOKIE BROWNIES**

Yeah, that's right: Space out those slice-and-bake jack-o'-lantern cookies *on top* of a pan of brownies halfway through baking, then let them finish together in the oven. Voilà, two desserts in one!



- **MUMMY DOGS**

These nostalgic Frankenfurters aren't just for little kids!

- **PUMPKIN EVERYTHING!**

From pumpkin cheesecake cookies to pumpkin chocolate chip bread, TikTok is full of recipes that feature this fall-forward flavor.

- **FRIED APPLE RINGS & DONUTS**

Bobbing for apples is a messy affair. For a party game with similar appeal — and less drippage — hang O-shaped treats from ribbons and challenge guests to chow down hands-free.



COLORING PAGE | Pluto Rigglesman







**EASILY EXPLAINED** | Easy Jack Portman

## Movie monsters' origin stories prove just as rich as characters' legacies

Classic monster movies are a staple of Halloween.

Black-and-white motion pictures have made their mark, being popular from the '30s to the '50s but continuing on in their status as "classics" today, and influencing most modern iterations of these stories. But where do these characters come from? Well, infamous monsters such as Dracula, The Mummy, and Creature from the Black Lagoon all have surprisingly rich yet simple histories.

Most stories originate as literature. Mary Shelley, the author of the original

*Frankenstein*, is considered the modern inventor of science-fiction. Her novel was published in 1818 and has remained influential on modern storytelling today. It serves as a cautionary tale, warning of the dangers of technology, but was also derived from the fact that Shelley went through multiple tough pregnancies and the loss of three of the four children she birthed. Shelley started writing the novel at age 18 and had already lived through one tragic experience with a baby; when it

SEE MONSTERS,, PAGE 18

MONSTERS, FROM PAGE 17

## Movie monsters rooted in lit & lore

was published, she was pregnant a third time. These deeply traumatic and heartbreaking motifs are present throughout the novel, most of it dealing with the themes of new life and death.

What most are unaware of is that, once again, Shelley was influenced by her own struggles with creating life. She never named the first child she had — the first to pass away — and similarly, she never explicitly named the creature in her book. People who like to correct others, often point out that, technically, the monster is not named Frankenstein — the doctor who created him is.

The big-screen adaptation of the novel, the one most commonly known today, was released in 1931 and starred Boris Karloff in the infamous role of the monster, a role he is now most known for. The picture was a hit and has maintained steady popularity and cultural relevance to this

day. Karloff was also impacted by the character; later, he was quoted looking back on the character fondly: “My dear old monster, he’s my best friend.”

Multiple sequels and crossovers were crafted for the character and remakes have found their way to the screen countless times since. The classic novel, described by *The New Yorker* as a “female gothic,” has been reinventing itself throughout culture and taking on different meanings to different people ever since Dr. Frankenstein proclaimed, “It’s alive ... IT’S ALIVE!”

The other most well known film of the time does originate from a well known novel, but the origins go back far beyond that. *Dracula*, first published in 1897 and penned by Bram Stoker, follows the most infamous example of a vampire, Count Dracula himself. *Dracula* is credited with coining a lot of the

SEE MONSTERS, PAGE 19

MONSTERS, FROM PAGE 18

## Pop culture has long loved monsters

current cultural understanding of vampires, but the idea of them spreads back hundreds of years to Eastern Europe, specifically Bulgaria, and was not very similar to the modern notion. Early on, vampires were essentially conceived as ghosts or poltergeists, non-corporeal beings who haunted townsfolk.

Although vampires are popularly associated with bats nowadays, a rat would have been a better comparison for the original incarnation. Vampires were not initially seen as blood drinkers but more as disease spreaders, infectious and cruel.

The idea of this creature spread across Europe and into the Americas, becoming fully fleshed out in the 1800s, thanks in no small part to Stoker's iconic novel and, later, the 1931 film adaptation. (*See page 4 for a review of the classic film.*)

Vampires are still a staple of the modern horror genre, from the Buffy-loving teens of the '90s and early aughts, to the

cultural phenomenon that was *Twilight*, all the way to today, with hit shows like "What We Do in the Shadows."

Other foundational monster movies were also adapted from famous works of literature. *The Invisible Man* (1933) was an adaptation of a 19th-century novel by H.G. Wells, also known as *The Time Machine* (1895).

Real life was an inspiration for some classics, like *The Mummy* (1999), which was an all-original plot loosely based on the fears that followed the 1922 discovery of the ancient King Tutankhamen's tomb in Egypt.

Similar to *Dracula* — and also starring Bela Lugosi — *The Wolf Man* became an instant classic upon release in 1941. But it differed from the tale of the famous count in that it drew inspiration solely from classic folklore, not any author's compilation of it, and included references to traditions like

SEE MONSTERS, PAGE 20

MONSTERS, FROM PAGE 20

## Films still make ‘monstrous’ impact

using wolfsbane and silver to keep werewolves at bay.

The end of the modern monster renaissance is agreed to be 1954’s *Creature of the Black Lagoon*, another original story where human fear is represented by a fish-like man emerging from the dark depths of the water. This story has had a less pervasive hold on popular culture, but its impact is still felt. For example, the Academy

Award winner for Best Picture in 2018 was Guillermo del Toro’s *The Shape of Water*, a film that takes clear visual inspiration from *Creature*.

All of this is to say that such a simple thing — a series of disconnected popular horror movies from the black-and-white film era — can have rich and storied histories, as well as a large impact on the world and culture of today.

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CLASSICS, FROM PAGE 6

## *Frankenstein* legacy ‘alive’ and well

minutes, consisting of a tracking shot following a father clutching his dead little girl in his arms, an accidental victim of Frankenstein’s monster. The visual is brutally gut-wrenching, completely undermining any sense of levity the film had before.

My only complaint with this movie is the final scene. After the high-pressure chase and ultimate demise of the monster,

the film ends with Frankenstein’s father joking about wine. It’s jarringly silly after a film that had previously done so well at balancing comedy with thought-provoking drama.

Despite being slightly let down by the conclusion, I could appreciate *Frankenstein* as a pioneer in both the horror and sci-fi genres — as well as a highly entertaining film.

FROZEN CARDINAL, FROM PAGE 1

## ‘Every note compelled us to bow ...’

blinding daylight, there are eerie voices echoing, chanting in a deep, haunting cadence. The air is thick with an overwhelming, oppressive aura, suffocating our senses.

Then, there’s the Frozen Cardinal. When we placed it back in the crevasse, its song pierced the silence. The melody, though enchanting, bore an ancient malevolence. Every note compelled us to bow, as if in servitude to an incomprehensible, unseen force. Resisting was futile; defiance only intensified the voices, speaking an unfathomable, ancient tongue that clawed at our sanity.

Each night, the desire to join the Cardinal in its otherworldly chorus gnaws at us, driving us closer to the edge of sanity.

I fear we are not alone in this desolate place. Something ancient and malefic watches, its influence seeping into our minds, unraveling our sanity thread by thread.

I seem to be the only one who’s sane enough at this point. Helander’s odd behavior has worsened drastically: He now appears as a mere specter of his former self, his once-steady demeanor shattered ... to say the

least. He has been constantly trying to go down to see it.

We found him pale and sweaty — a ghostly white — standing *there*. He’s become obsessed, relentlessly attempting to descend into that abyss, arms contorted into an eerie L-shape. He muttered with frantic urgency before a struggle unfolded.

After Partridge, with the help of Stevens and Wilbur, managed to inject Helander with a sedative, I was finally able to examine him. My God, Gerry, what I found! His vital signs were erratic, his pulse was weak and irregular, and his skin had taken on an odd and terrifying pallor, cold and clammy to the touch. How was this possible in such a short amount of time?

He had muscle rigidity; his limbs seemed to be resisting even the gentlest manipulation, as if his body had become some kind of fortress, shielding him from something that defied conventional medical explanation. His limbs literally turned blue due to a lack of oxygen, Gerry! His cardiovascular system is failing at an alarming

SEE FROZEN CARDINAL, PAGE 22

FROZEN CARDINAL, FROM PAGE 21

## ‘And his eyes — oh, God! — his eyes!’

rate, yet there are no signs of hypothermia.

And his eyes — oh, God! — his eyes ... they glisten with a strange, unnatural sheen that reflects nothing. When I was examining him, his pupils were dilated beyond the limitations of human physiology, and they had no responsiveness to light. I couldn’t tear my gaze away from those eyes ... I was overcome by a deep and paralyzing fear, my heart heavy with profound sadness for what had become of our friend.

Wedder entered the tent. Her eyes, usually bright and filled with curiosity, were now bloodshot and haunted, mirroring the pain that gnawed at her soul. Her hands, which had once wielded linguistic expertise with finesse, trembled as she traced the contours of Helander’s lifeless fingers. The room, once filled with the soft hum of scientific instruments, now echoed with the hushed whispers of disbelief and sorrow.

As I enveloped her in my arms, her body quivered against mine, her tears soaking into my shoulder. The scent of her perfume mingled with the raw scent of fear, creating

an unsettling cocktail of emotions in the air. Each sob that escaped her lips seemed to carry the weight of a thousand unsaid words, a thousand dreams shattered in the wake of this inescapable tragedy.

“I-I have to tell someone ...” she choked out, her voice fragile, like porcelain on the edge of breaking. Her fingers clutched at my shirt, seeking an anchor in the storm of emotions raging within her.

“When Helander was standing there, he spoke in Latin, but it wasn’t just Latin,” she gulped. “It was tongues from ages long past, languages buried in the sands of time. I recognized fragments of Sumerian and Sanskrit, and there were echoes of languages I couldn’t name ... or even know ...”

Her words came out in gasps, as if the very act of speaking threatened to consume her.

“He mentioned *obscura*,” Wedder continued. “I-I’ve never heard or read about it. Gods like Nergal, the Babylonian deity of the underworld, and Chinnamasta, the Hindu goddess of self-sacrifice —

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## ‘Fear clung to her like a second skin’

obscure myths from civilizations long gone. He spoke of shadowy figures, entities whispered about in the dead of night, beings that feast on fear and despair.”

The room felt ... it became colder, the air thick with the weight of the knowledge Wedder had shared.

“It’s impossible ...” she continued, her voice trembling with a mix of terror and disbelief. “Helander couldn’t have known about these myths. He couldn’t have understood the depths of darkness these gods represent. He never believed in any of it. He always expressed his indifference as an atheist. He always felt of those religions and their deities hopeless and just — sad. People depended on and devoted their lives to gods who probably don’t even exist and their teachings ... Yet his lips formed those words as if they were second nature, as if he had communed with some sort of ancient spirits.”

In that moment, I could feel the shiver that ran down her spine as she realized this, the fear that clung to her like a second skin. Wedder’s grief had transformed into a

profound sense of dread, a visceral realization that we were all now seemingly entangled in a web of mystery, strange forces that defied all logic and reason.

I held Wedder tighter, trying to convey reassurance through my touch, though the weight of her grief seemed impossibly heavy. Her tears dampened my shirt, but I didn’t mind; her pain was something I wished I could absorb, if only to spare her from the agony she was enduring.

“Wedder ...” I whispered, my voice soft, trying my best to be strong — if not for me, then for her and for the rest of us. After all, Helander was the head of our little pack ... “We’ll figure this out. We’ll find out what happened to Helander, I promise.”

My fingers gently brushed her hair, an instinctive gesture meant to offer solace. Looking into her tear-filled eyes, I asked the question that hung heavily in the air.

— TO BE CONTINUED —

*Check The Buccaneer’s website in November for the next installment of this gripping tale!*

# WANTED

## DEAD OR ALIVE



Bad news, Bucs: The L'il Buccaneer has escaped into the pages of this newspaper — and now it's up to you to find him! If you are able to locate the L'il Bue, visit Ms. Rizzetta in Room 242 to collect the bounty. Quick! Find him before he gets away!

### REWARD: CANDY

DESIGNED BY KATELYNN PARKER & ANGEL VELASCO