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MONSTER GIRL

by Dan Taube

Dan Taube
443 Green Bay Road
Highland Park, IL 60035
(773) 580-4633
taubedan@gmail.com

Characters

MONSTER GIRL, F, 16-21, a "weird kid"

MOM F, 38, MONSTER GIRL'S mom, moody, prone to fits of rage

JAY, M, 18, MONSTER GIRL'S older brother, a bully. Creepy, predatory.

DR. ACK, F, 50, child psychiatrist, detached, clinical

DAD, M, 44, MONSTER GIRL'S dad, selfish and manipulative

ANNA, F, 16-21, MONSTER GIRL'S new friend, another "weird kid"

MONSTERS, ensemble of four actors that serve as the MONSTERS that MONSTER GIRL refers to. They appear throughout the play in different forms.

Setting

Various places - Minnesota, Chicago, NYC: 1975-1989

PART I

Spotlight on MONSTER GIRL, our narrator and main character. When she speaks to the audience, she is 16 years old. In the other scenes she ages from nine years old to twenty-one. She is sickly thin, with long shaggy hair and haunted eyes.

MONSTER GIRL

I used to be scared of everything.

We see three GHOULISH SHAPES emerge from the shadows.

There are monsters everywhere. I started seeing monsters when I was a little kid. About five or six years old. Everyone accused me of making things up. Like the time I said there was a ghost in my room. But I knew they were real.

The truth is: I was scared of everything. Everything looked like a monster to me.

Teachers, relatives, other kids. Bullies. There were so many bullies. They were everywhere.

The GHOULISH SHAPES disappear.

One time I got so scared. Scared of monsters. Scared of everyone. Scared of death. I cried. I couldn't stop crying for days. Mom finally got sick of comforting me

Spotlight on MOM in the corner of the stage.

MOM

Shut up shut up shut up! If you don't stop that crying, I'll kill you myself!

Spotlight off MOM and back on MONSTER GIRL.

MONSTER GIRL

At that moment I was pretty afraid of her. So, I stopped. I retreated to my imaginary world with my imaginary friends. There was:

Dracula
 Frankenstein's Monster
 The Invisible Man
 Godzilla
 Creature from the Black Lagoon.
 T.Rex
 Bigfoot
 King Kong

And many more. I filled my room with them. Posters and model kits and books and magazines. All devoted to monsters.

These imaginary monsters. I needed to make friends with them. So, I could be less afraid. The more monsters I surrounded myself with the stronger I felt. The safer I felt.

My parents just thought I was weird. But these creatures, these monsters, these pieces of my imagination they were my home.

My older brother made fun of me. Called me monster girl. Called me ugly and stupid. Told me I looked like a monster.

JAY

Little creep.
 Little dyke.
 Weirdo.
 Psycho.
 Nobody likes you.
 Mom and Dad didn't want to have you, you know.
 Besides, you're adopted.
 We have a plan.
 To get rid of you.
 I'm going to kill you.
 Some night. In your sleep. You'll just never wake up. You'll never see it coming.

MONSTER GIRL

Family can be monsters too.

MONSTER GIRL

My brother was bad. But my cousin was ten times worse. He raped me. I was nine. I didn't know what was happening. Before I knew it, he was trying to enter me. I cried the whole time. He raped me in that basement where I had seen his dad beat the shit out of him. Used to kick him until he fell down and then he'd kick him some more until he couldn't move a muscle. I don't want you to feel sorry for him. You shouldn't. He was a creep. Him and my brother. In different ways. My whole family was. I don't remember trust or love or caring. Just violence and hate and fear. That is what family meant to me.

But these characters, these pretend monsters. They were my friends when I had none. I used to ask myself what would Dracula do? What would Frankenstein's monster do? I really got myself in trouble once. I was about 13. I had this bully who was relentless. He'd pull my hair, kick me, punch me in the stomach, the throat. One day I'd had enough. I took on the role of Dracula. Something just...came over me. I grabbed him by the throat and sunk my teeth into his neck. I actually broke skin. No blood though. Not really. But...there were consequences.

My parents were beside themselves. There was talk of a lawsuit from this boy's family.

I think that was the first time the concept of suicide became clear to me. I could end it. I couldn't be hurt any more. I wouldn't hurt anyone else. But I was so afraid of death I couldn't go through with it.

They didn't go through with the suit. His parents talked to my parents. All of the attacks on me came to light. We were both expelled. I was sent to a "special" school. Don't know what happened to him. Don't really care. Though if I saw him today I'd probably spit in his face. And the whole thing would start all over again.

Of course, this is when therapy began.

DR. ACK enters, female
psychiatrist, 50 years old.
Detached. Clinical. They both sit.

DR. ACK

Your mom tells me you're having problems at school.

MONSTER GIRL

Yes.

DR. ACK

What kind of problems?

MONSTER GIRL

I get angry.

DR. ACK

Everyone gets -

MONSTER GIRL

I get really angry.

DR. ACK

What do you get angry about?

MONSTER GIRL

Forget it. You'd never understand.

DR. ACK

Try me. I was a kid once.

MONSTER GIRL

My brother. The other kids. Especially the guys. They won't stop. Pushing me. Tripping me. Calling me names. And it makes me angry. I never fight back, but I imagine myself killing them. I'm afraid I'll grow up to be a killer.

DR. ACK

You won't grow up to be a killer.

MONSTER GIRL

How do you know? I get so angry I feel like I'm gonna...

DR. ACK

Burst? We all feel like that sometimes. Now let me show you some inkblots and you can tell me what you see.

Lights out on DR. ACK.

MONSTER GIRL

Dr. Ack really wasn't much help. Child psychiatrist. She didn't seem to realize, though, that kids' emotions can be as complex as adults. Maybe she did and she was just a lazy doctor, I don't know.

But I had real rage that needed to be dealt with. My dad told me I should count to ten whenever I felt that ... rage. I don't know what else to call it. At fourteen years of age, I had already seen much more than I should have. And, of course, the bad dreams had started. I used to wake up in the middle of the night either screaming my lungs out or wanting to scream and not being able to. Feeling powerless. Then there were my parents' epic colossal fights. They lasted for hours. This frightened me too. I used to hide my head underneath my pillow.

MOM

Don't you tell me-

DAD

Judi!

MOM

I know what you're-

DAD

Judi, stop! You're being hysterical.

MOM

I AM NOT. STOP CALLING ME THAT. I AM NOT HYSTERICAL!

MOM and DAD begin to struggle with
each other physically. DAD
restrains MOM

DAD

What are you doing? Will you settle down? Come on, the kids will hear.

MOM

What do you care?

DAD

I care. Let's just settle down and talk about this.

MOM

I won't settle down! I won't!! Stop telling me what to do!!!

MONSTER GIRL

Me and my mother had that in common.

MOM

You're always telling me what to do, how to talk, how to sound what to do, what to be. And I'm SICK of it! I'm leaving!

MOM storms off. Slamming the door behind her.

MONSTER GIRL

And that was how my parent's marriage ended. What was already terrible was about to get much worse. I mean, secretly, I wanted it all to be over. I wanted her gone. I was so afraid. All the time. Between her and my brother, I was certain my days were numbered.

I thought that me and my Dad were going to be like roommates. My brother was gone. Moved out. It WAS just me and my dad. But every night he disappeared, and he brought women home very late at night. There was a parade of women marching in and out of our house. I didn't think about it much. I just knew that I was lonely. I was always alone. I needed my Dad. But he was busy pleasing himself. I really started to sink into another depression. I didn't care about anything. I started burning my skin. Just to feel something other than sad. I tried to talk to my dad about it, but he always turned it around on me.

DAD

You want me to be happy though, don't you?

MONSTER GIRL

Yes, but

DAD

You don't mind, right?

MONSTER GIRL

Dad-

DAD

That's a good girl. We'll talk tomorrow.

MONSTER GIRL

We never did. (Pause.) That's when I fell in love. No, not with a boy or girl. Alcohol.

MONSTER GIRL takes out a bottle of whiskey. Pours herself a large glass. She drinks.

Everyone's left me. My mom and dad. My brother. No family. Well, good. They sucked anyway. But I've got whiskey. This is love. This is all the love I'll ever need.

MONSTER GIRL hugs the bottle tight. A girl, ANNA, approaches her.

ANNA

Am I interrupting something?

MONSTER GIRL

No! Hello. Do I know you?

ANNA sticks her hand out.

ANNA

Anna. (Pause) And you are?

MONSTER GIRL

MG. Nice to meet you, Anna.

ANNA

Nice to meet you, "MG". (Referring to her bottle of whiskey) Feel like sharing?

MONSTER GIRL

Sure. Pull up some floor.

ANNA does. She stares at MONSTER GIRL for a moment. Grabs the bottle and takes a big swig.

MONSTER GIRL

Nice. What do you do for an encore?

ANNA

I don't do encores.

She takes a swig.

MONSTER GIRL

So, are we the big drinkers in this party?

ANNA

Looks that way.

MONSTER GIRL

I love drinking, you know. Everyone's given up on me. My family. My whole fucking family. But I still have this.

ANNA

You're a weird kid.

MONSTER GIRL

Thanks. You too.

ANNA

Bwa ha ha ha ha!

MONSTER GIRL

You're a weird kid.

ANNA

Wanna be weird together?

MONSTER GIRL

Let's.

ANNA

Yeah. Let's.

ANNA kisses MONSTER GIRL as the
lights fade. End Part I

PART II

ANNA stands in the background.
 MONSTER GIRL addresses the
 audience and once again
 ghoulish shapes appear.

MONSTER GIRL

You're thinking that Anna became the love of my life. Perfect for each other. Not by a long shot. She was a great drinking buddy, but... she had other problems.

ANNA lays on the floor with a
 mirror in front of her. Stomach
 down. She lays out lines of
 coke to snort. Which she does.

That kiss she gave me. Not so special. Anna would kiss just about anyone that wanted to kiss her. Later on, she would tell me she was drunk that night. Didn't remember a thing. Which she didn't. I kept chasing after her, though. When I called her weird, I really meant special, unique, unlike anyone I ever met. I wanted her to be more than friends with me...There were lots of other girls around. But no one like her. I wanted someone passionate, creative, intelligent and mischievous. She was all of those things.

MONSTER GIRL

I started reading at 3. Dr. Suess.

ANNA

I started reading at 4. Anne Sexton.

MONSTER GIRL

Get the fuck out of here. Anne Sexton! At four!

ANNA

I got some pretty strange ideas from that lady.

MONSTER GIRL

I started reading Nietzsche at 10.

ANNA

Wait wasn't he a Nazi?

MONSTER GIRL

He was German. Not the same thing.

ANNA

Should we get philosophical?

MONSTER GIRL

Like, how?

ANNA

What does it all mean? Life, death, the universe.

MONSTER GIRL

Do you ever think about...where does the sky end?

ANNA

Now you're talking.

MONSTER GIRL

I mean does it go on forever and never end?

ANNA

Or do you eventually end up back where you started?

MONSTER GIRL

I don't know. Do you?

ANNA

I don't know. I don't know what I know. You know?

THE GHOULISH SHAPES are
getting closer know. Focused
solely on MONSTER GIRL.

MONSTER GIRL

My monsters were starting to change from friends to something really scary. They were INSECURITY, JEALOUSY, LONELINESS and SUICIDE. I thought about that last one a lot. I'd had sadness throughout my life, but now things were really starting to amp up. I thought If I can't have Anna, if we can't be together, what is left for me to want? I know. It's a shallow thought, but my loneliness was really starting to eat me up. I was no longer just a snack for my depression but a four-course meal. This feeling followed me everywhere. Even Anna saw it.

ANNA

Is everything okay?

MONSTER GIRL

Have you ever been in love?

ANNA

No.

MONSTER GIRL

(Lying)

Me neither.

ANNA

I don't particularly want to be in love. Unless you're getting married, which I don't see myself doing, eventually you're going to break up. Why go through all that?

MONSTER GIRL

Affection? Companionship?

ANNA

I can have all that without love. Like what we have. Why risk getting your feelings hurt?

MONSTER GIRL

You think "this" is affection?

ANNA

No. But this is.

She leans in to kiss her.
MONSTER GIRL puts up a
hand.

MONSTER GIRL

Stop.

ANNA

You don't like me?

MONSTER GIRL

I like you very much. But what if I want more? What if I...

ANNA

Don't say it.

MONSTER GIRL

What if I love you?

ANNA

Stop it! You're going to ruin everything!

MONSTER GIRL

Or possibly make it better. How can you not want love? (Pause)
You're telling me you really don't want to be loved?

ANNA

You don't love me. You said you'd never been in love.

MONSTER GIRL

I lied.

ANNA

You love me and you lie to me?

MONSTER GIRL

You're running scared.

ANNA

And you're chasing me. What does that say about you?

MONSTER GIRL

I hadn't thought about that. Was I a stalker? A creep? Why was I chasing someone who obviously didn't want me? There seemed to be a pattern here. I'd never been kissed. All I'd ever done was chase after girls who I knew, deep down, would just reject me. Was Anna just another in a long line? A long line of the same girl with different faces. They all said they'd be my friend.

GHOULISH VOICE #1

I'll always be your friend.

GHOULISH VOICE #2

I'll always be your friend.

GHOULISH VOICE #3

I'll always be your friend.

GHOULISH VOICE #4

I'll always be your friend.

ALL GHOULISH VOICES

I'LL ALWAYS BE YOUR FRIEND!!

ANNA

I think I should go.

MONSTER GIRL

Maybe you should.

ANNA

Friends?

MONSTER GIRL

Of course. (Pause) Why did you try to kiss me?

ANNA

You're cute.

MONSTER GIRL

But you...you said you didn't want...

ANNA

Just because you're cute doesn't mean I want to marry you. Doesn't mean I'm falling in love. I'm young. You're young. We should just have fun. Y'know. Fool around.

MONSTER GIRL

With each other?

ANNA

Yeah! You gotta lighten up. Remember we said we're gonna be weird together?

MONSTER GIRL

Yeah.

ANNA

Well let's be weird.

MONSTER GIRL

It is Halloween. The best night of the year for weirdo's!

ANNA

Totally.

MONSTER GIRL

Let's get dressed up!

ANNA

Scary ghosts!

MONSTER GIRL

Bloody skeletons!

ANNA

Bad-ass witches!

MONSTER GIRL

I know...

ANNA & MONSTER GIRL

KILLER CLOWNS FROM SPACE!!!

MONSTER GIRL

We had a great time that night. Too much tequila. Too much blow. But it was fun. For a change I had all her attention. I felt on top of the world. I knew she had feelings for me. She just couldn't...talk about it. If I tried, she would get this trapped look in her eyes. I was always trying to get to know her better. Half the time I wondered if the stories she told me were true or not.

ANNA

I'm telling you it came back!

MONSTER GIRL

The Ouija board?

ANNA

Yes!

MONSTER GIRL

It just reappeared in your bedroom?

ANNA

My mom kept throwing it out.

MONSTER GIRL

Why?

ANNA

She said it was evil. Straight from the devil. And I had heard these crazy stories.

MONSTER GIRL

Like what?

ANNA

Like the girl who played Ouija one night and the board told her to go to a specific place at a specific time and she would meet the man of her dreams.

MONSTER GIRL

What happened?

ANNA

She went to the bar the board told her to go to. She met a man there. Handsome. Charming. Wealthy.

MONSTER GIRL

And?

ANNA

He raped and killed her.

MONSTER GIRL

(Back to the audience)

A real buzz-kill, huh? She would always just have these STORIES. On one hand, they were incredible, amazing stories. But on the other I just didn't believe them most of the time. I wanted to believe her. It just seemed like she was playing games with me. Teasing me. Making fun of my gullibility. I went along with it most of the time. Even if I knew she was lying. It seemed to make her happy. And I would do anything to make her happy.

ANNA

Hey.

MONSTER GIRL

The last time I would play along. Her 21ST birthday.

ANNA

So... you taking me out? This is THE birthday!

MONSTER GIRL

I was thinking. I was thinking.

ANNA

Where would we go?

MONSTER GIRL

There's this tex-mex place on 10th.

ANNA

Oh yeah?

MONSTER GIRL

I kinda go there a lot.

ANNA

By yourself?

MONSTER GIRL

No. Sometimes. (Pause) Yes. Mostly for drinks.

ANNA

Ooh. I love drinks.

MONSTER GIRL

Me too.

ANNA

What do you usually order there?

MONSTER GIRL

Almost always a Long Island Iced Tea.

ANNA

Now that's a drink. And it's good?

MONSTER GIRL

So good.

ANNA

You wanna do some blow before we head out?

MONSTER GIRL

You got some?

ANNA

Yeah. Here.

ANNA pours out a line for her
on the back of her hand.

Go for it.

She does so.

My turn.

She sets up a line for herself
as well and snorts it.

MONSTER GIRL

Off to the party?

ANNA

Lead the way!

MONSTER GIRL

On the way to the restaurant, I took her hand. Which was a bold move for me. Even bolder, she let me. Taking her hand was a very intimate gesture that she usually had no patience for. But she let me. She was definitely treating me as more than a friend. Did she have a agenda? Or was she finally letting her guard down; letting me in and letting me see the real her. She talked nonstop on the way to the restaurant. And I started to relax. We both started to relax. I don't remember what the joke was but we were both laughing so hard when we got to the restaurant.

They enter the restaurant.

Two long islands, please!

ANNA

Two? Why not four?

MONSTER GIRL

Four long islands please! (To audience) We got our drinks and put the first two away in no time. (Back to ANNA) 3.2.1. Drink!

They drink.

ANNA

So many colors.

MONSTER GIRL

Are you okay?

ANNA

Purple and orange and blue and yellow.

MONSTER GIRL

You're fucking with me, right?

ANNA

You want to fuck? With me?

MONSTER GIRL

I mean yeah. But maybe not right now. You're kinda...

ANNA

What?

MONSTER GIRL

Drunk. You're wasted.

ANNA

You're wasted, kiddo...I think you're...I think...I lo...

MONSTER GIRL

And like that she passed out. And then the fun began. I had to get her from downtown back to her apartment in midtown. But she was passed out. I knew she'd be okay if I could just get her home. Every once in a while she would come to, if just for a second.

ANNA

Where am I? Who are you?

MONSTER GIRL

I'm...

ANNA

Who am I?

MONSTER GIRL

Big question. That last one. She stayed passed out until right after I got her home. Unfortunately, she didn't have a key to her own apartment or she forgot it. When I got her home, no one was there. I begged the main office downstairs to give me the key. But they wouldn't budge. When I got back upstairs where I had left her, she was gone. I banged on the door hoping that her roommates had scooped her up. Sure enough. Thinking I had just abandoned her on their front door. They wouldn't let me in. I just needed to know she was safe. Now my ghoulish friends were following me around looking at me like I was the monster.

I ain't no monster.

I ain't no monster.

I AINT NO MONSTER!!!

END PART II.

PART III

MONSTER GIRL

Me and Anna were on and off all throughout college. I learned a lot about my monsters from being with her. The harder I tried, the more ferocious they became.

THE MONSTERS appearing growling and snarling. This is the most vicious and dangerous we have seen them.

I was unable to make friends with my monsters this time.

We were at odds with each other.

My anger really began to flourish at this time.

I was overwhelmed with this desire to hurt people. Not so much physically. But in other ways. I broke into a stranger's home. Me and my friend, Christine, after a long night of drinking. Someone left their front door open, and we just let ourselves in and helped ourselves to whatever we thought we could carry home. This was really the beginning of the end for me.

The end of me.

I couldn't continue as I was, and I couldn't stop myself. I was starting to make plans for my own destruction.

Alcohol.

Alcohol seemed to be the way to go. I would drink myself to death. I would go to the nearest liquor store use all the money I had left to buy all the liquor that would buy. I would lock myself in my apartment with no food and just drink and drink until I died.

This was my plan.

A plan.

I must've been serious.

I got scared. Real scared. There was a part of my brain that was trying to save the other part.

I bargained. Maybe I could let myself live if I quit drinking. This seemed impossible to me. Life without alcohol. Where would I get my love?

I was twenty-five years old and still I felt unloved. Unlovable.

All my dreams were gone. I started out and I wanted to be an actress. I had that dream for a long time. Then I wanted to be a director. I almost succeeded at that one. Then for the longest time I was nothing. Nothing at all. A consumer of alcohol and drugs.

Throughout all this bargaining and negotiating with myself. I wound up getting in a cab and getting myself to a hospital. I told them I wanted to kill myself and I needed to get better. Some part of my brain had kicked into survival mode. If I hadn't gotten into that cab that night, I don't know what would've happened.

My dreams of love were dead.

My dreams of art were dead.

I had no friends. No companions.

And no family.

No monsters anymore.

All I had was me.

And that...was enough.

THE END

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