

The 'Monster Rules'

Written by Bob Alexander

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Y'know why I often refer to the Universal Studios monsters from the thirties and forties? Because those were the monsters I grew up with. In the fifties, the studio packed up its classic horror films and sold them to television. Every Saturday night I would be in front of our black and white Zenith from 10:30 pm until signoff watching channel 11s *Nightmare*. That's where I discovered Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, The Mummy, and The Wolf Man. That's when I learned The Monster Rules.

Everybody

had to learn The Monster Rules because if you didn't there was no way in hell you could ever get to sleep after watching

Nightmare

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The most important rule was Monsters Could Be Killed. It might take the whole movie to do it, but in the last few minutes of the final reel Dracula was staked, Frankenstein's monster was burned alive in a flaming windmill, the Egyptian goddess Isis reduced the mummy Imhotep to dust, and Larry Talbot, The Wolf Man, was beaten to death with a silver walking stick wielded by his own father. When all the monsters had been dispatched I could climb the darkened stairway up to my room without being too scared. Until I saw Dracula.

Even in my 8 year old head I understood Frankenstein's monster, The Mummy, and The Wolf Man were in a sense innocent. The reanimated monster was stitched together from dead bodies, zapped into life by a lightning bolt, and tortured by a demented dwarf. Imhotep, an Egyptian high priest, committed sacrilege against the gods to revive the woman he loved only to be cursed to live forever within a preserved corpse. Larry Talbot thought he was rescuing a woman from a wolf attack when he was bitten by a werewolf thus doomed to become a monster by moonlight. These were monsters ruled by forces completely out of their control. But Dracula that guy was *evil*. He toyed with his victims before draining them of their blood. Like a cat tormenting a mouse Dracula played with his food.

The night I watched Dracula I don't know how long I sat at the foot of the stairs peering up into the darkness. Why tonight of all nights was the light at the top of the stairs burned out? That only happens in *horror* movies. Eventually my parents came home and *What was I doing still up? Don't I know what time it is? Get to bed. Now!*

I started up the stairs like a condemned man walking the last mile to the electric chair. I knew there was no such thing as Dracula. But I felt, as deep down you could go, there was

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Something In The Dark and it was going to Get Me. It didn't. And the next Saturday night I was sitting in front of the television waiting for my next installment of *Nightmare*.

Universal Studios knew not to kill off a cash cow and brought The Monsters back for sequel after sequel. But they followed The Monster Rules. Frankenstein's monster wasn't killed in the mill fire after all. Some idiot removed the stake from the vampire's skeletal remains and Dracula rematerialized. A grave robber opened Larry Talbot's coffin at night under a full moon and that's all it takes to revive a werewolf. There was logic in the Monster Mythos that allowed them to come back again and again until diminishing box office returns proved moviegoers were tired of the Classic Monsters from Universal Studios.

Three new monsters showed up in the late '70s and '80s: Michael Meyers from *Halloween*, Jason Vorhees from *Friday the 13th*, and Freddy Kruger from *Nightmare on Elm Street*. These three movies collectively spawned 28 sequels. There's no need to look for real life examples of Wretched Excess when *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* wasn't the final *anything*, because eight more sequels were made.

I didn't like this new crop of monsters because the movies weren't scary and they didn't follow The Monster Rules - they didn't follow *any* rules. You could jam a knitting needle into Michael Meyer's neck and he'd fall down dead, but then bounce back ready for murderous action. A machete buried in Jason's head barely slowed him down and *nothing* fazed Freddie. These monsters killed promiscuous teens and were in turn killed over and over again throughout the movie until the film in the projector *finally* ran out. Flap flap flap, end of movie.

Movie audiences in the '70s and '80s didn't *care* about the old Monster Rules. They wanted carnage and they wanted their monsters *relentless*.

Although I think ultimately these movies are bad movies, the relentless monster is more fitting for our times. But it's been 3 or 4 years since the last Michael/Jason/Freddy franchise flick.

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Those monsters have been supplanted by the new and improved relentless massacring monsters hordes of flesh-eating zombies. And zombies follow The Monster Rules.

You *can* kill them. Just shoot 'em in the head. Go ahead it'll give you something to do until you run out of bullets. And then the surviving zombies wade in and rip you to pieces. It's a numbers game. The living are hopelessly outnumbered by the dead. The oldest cemetery in Vancouver has 92,000 graves. There are 15 more cemeteries in the area. If one night *all* the dead rose from their graves...well, you do the math.

Now the reason I started thinking about an old Zenith television set, Dracula, a dark stairway, and slasher flicks from 30 years ago, culminating with flesh-eating zombies is because I read the headlines from the USA. The only word I can think of is: *relentless*.

Each and every day, crazy stupid people - usually Republicans - or Republicans *and* Democrats, endorse some steaming pile of lunacy that is *designed*

to diminish the lives of the hapless citizens of the United States. They took food from the mouths of poor people over the last holiday season with perfect sociopathic timing. Yesterday I read:

Even though President Barack Obama's formal budget proposal Tuesday omitted cuts to Social Security, the White House strongly suggested that a controversial policy to cut the program "remains on the table" if Republicans are willing to compromise

.

The Defense Department could go on a starvation diet for the next twenty years and still be a bloated waste of taxpayer money, but the White House, in the spirit of *compromise*, is willing to carve up the future of aging Americans. These anti-life policies have been regularly and thoroughly debunked since the Reagan Era but no matter how many times they've seemingly been killed, some corporate mad scientist infuses more cash-blood into the corrupt political system and reanimates the relentless dead.

And They Just Keep Coming They Just Keep Coming.

And they *never* follow The Monster Rules. That's only in the movies.