

MONSTER PARTY

Written by

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INT. DRAWING ROOM - MORNING - GENEVA - 1816

Script across the screen reads "Geneva 1816."

Close up on an embroidery hoop. Fingers move quickly, adding a flower to punctuate the words "Leave me alone." We hear a sigh off screen. The fingers drop the needle.

Zoom out to see an annoyed MARY(19). She rolls her eyes, and turns to her stepsister, CLAIRE (18), who sits on the sofa opposite Mary.

The drawing room is only half-lived in. The two women each occupy a shabbily upholstered sofa. The room behind them is filled with drop-cloth covered chairs. The fireplace has a low fire within it.

MARY

Yes, Jane?

CLAIRE

You know it's Claire now. Percy and Georgie even said it: Claire is more ro-man-tic.

MARY

Yes... *Claire*?

CLAIRE

It's nothing, my dear dear dearest best step-sister Mary.

MARY

Seems like something.

CLAIRE

Nope. Nothing.

MARY

Yet you persist in sighing?

CLAIRE

Fine! I'll stop sighing. I'll stop breathing. Would you like that? I'll stop living if it suits you! You don't understand my pain!

Claire gets up from the sofa to dramatically flop back on to it. She wriggles around for effect. Mary isn't looking. Mary's focus is back on her embroidery. Claire sighs again.

MARY

(not looking up)
You said it was nothing.

CLAIRE

UGH!

Claire lets out a wail and exits the room. Door! Slams!

MARY

Finally alone...

Mary picks up her needle to start on another flower when the door slams again.

MARY (CONT'D)

I thought you said it was nothing!

PERCY

No, it is most assuredly something!

Mary turns to see her "husband", PERCY (24). Mary smiles. She can't help herself. She loves the guy, even though he already has a wife, and he's sleeping with her step-sister.

MARY

Percy! I thought you were Claire.

PERCY

That dratted woman! How is a man to focus with Claire wriggling around?

Percy wriggles to demonstrate. Mary raises her eyebrows.

PERCY (CONT'D)

I mean, a man doesn't mind a little wriggling at night or in a boat or that one time in a carriage but...

Mary puts her hand to her forehead. She's heard this before.

MARY

Enough, Percy. We all know. You've had sex with my step-sister.

PERCY

Well, yes. What's the point of free love if you can't love your lover's family... freely?

Percy ambles about the room as he pontificates.

MARY

Wife. I'm your wife.

PERCY

Sure, sure. Wife. Yeah. I love it. Wife of my heart. Works for me.

MARY

Just don't tell your legal wife?

PERCY

Do you see Harriet here, Mary? What more do you want? I left her in England. I'm not sure what you want me to do here. If the English legal system would catch up, a man would be allowed to have two wives. Three. Seven.

MARY

Seven?

PERCY

Twenty four! One of each year of my life. And we'll get a little farm and--

MARY

(annoyed)

Great.

PERCY

Free love, Mary! If we put a price on it we are no better than... well... um...

MARY

The fishmonger?

PERCY

The fishmonger! My wives are not like fish! Each one priceless except for Harriet who looks like a trout and is worth just as much.

MARY

Oh, Percy. You do know how to woo a woman.

Mary throws down her embroidery hoop and leaps up to embrace Percy. They make out wildly. Lots of limbs moving in incongruous directions.

Their kiss session is interrupted by the door SLAMMING OPEN to reveal Claire, looking very pleased with herself.

MARY (CONT'D)

Not now!

PERCY

Another time! Say... in an hour?

Mary turns to Percy, furious.

MARY (CONT'D)
In an hour?!

PERCY
Two? Three...? Why are you upset?

CLAIRE
I'm not here for that. I'm here to
announce that my lover has arrived!
Lord Byron is here! In Geneva.

MARY
(enthused)
Oh good!

PERCY
(less enthused)
Oh good!

END COLD OPEN.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Percy and Mary sit next to one another on a couch. Mary leans forward, interested in the newcomer. She pours him a cup of tea. Percy sinks back into the couch, tightening his hold around Mary's shoulders. Claire clings to LORD GEORGE BYRON (28) who has little interest in her. In the corner, sits the wildly handsome and wildly ignored JOHN (21). He keeps trying to get Mary's attention to get his teacup filled, but to no avail. Lord Byron is finishing a story.

GEORGE

And, as he leaned over the fence to empty his accounts, I shouted "I'd heard you lost your wife, but I didn't realize you'd lost your nose!" Everyone laughed. Great job.

Cue uproarious laughter from everyone but Percy. Claire spasms with joy.

JOHN

Ha! That's the kind of story to make a man thirsty!

Everyone ignores John. He holds his empty teacup upside down. It's empty.

PERCY

Sleeping with someone who isn't your wife isn't an accomplishment.

Mary looks up from her embroidery. Her embroidery now includes a circle. Inside the circle is the word "step-sister." She stitches a line through it.

MARY

And what's an accomplishment, Percy? Having two wives?

CLAIRE

He could always have three.

Claire winks at Percy. Percy frowns. Claire turns towards George.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Or perhaps the famous Lord Byron could do with another wife?

George gets up IMMEDIATELY and moves across the room. He grabs John's teacup on the way. He goes to drink from it, and frowns.

GEORGE

No tea, John? Why didn't you say something?

CLAIRE

I'll pour your tea.

Claire hurries over to pour some tea in the cup. John goes to grab the teacup from George, but he's already moved away. George drinks the tea in a single gulp.

GEORGE

No, no, no. A poem, for you.

CLAIRE

Yay!

GEORGE

Too many wives/Of mine and of men/To take on any more/It is with honesty, I contend/I find you quite the bore.

Claire claps before she realizes and...

CLAIRE

Well, that's not very nice.

Everyone ignores her.

GEORGE

I, Lord Byron, George Gordon, came to Geneva for a vacation. And, of course, to meet the illustrious Mary Godwin and Percy Shelley.

George inclines his head decorously towards the couple. Percy harrumphs. Mary smiles.

MARY

Mary Shelley. That's my name. Mrs. Mary Shelley.

CLAIRE

(in a cough)
You wish.

MARY

Well, Harriet Shelley isn't here to claim she's Percy's wife. So, for now, I'm his only one.

CLAIRE

You can call yourself Mary Shelley
but going from Jane to Claire is
"too much"?

GEORGE

(horrified)

Your name is Jane? That's so...

JOHN

Lovely! Just like tea, which I
would like some of.

Everyone ignores John.

CLAIRE

No, it's Claire now. You said it
was a romantic name. Remember? When
I wrote you for career advice?

George grimaces.

GEORGE

How could I forget? You kept
showing up at work until...

JOHN

We're all in Geneva!

MARY

Who are you?

JOHN

I'm John - I'm George's...

John looks at George. George looks at John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Doctor?

George nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Doctor.

GEORGE

Obviously. Just a man and his
doctor traveling together like men
and their doctors do.

George slaps John on the back. John coughs.

JOHN

Of course.

GEORGE

Of course.

JOHN

I'm also writing a book about
George. Lord Byron. Lord George?

George places his teacup on the mantle of the fireplace. From here, he orates out to the room.

GEORGE

We've heard enough, John. Let's
talk about Lord Byron. That's me.
Everyone has heard of me. Read my
work. Seen my plays. Heard that I'm
sleeping with my half-sister, as if
that's a full crime. If anything it
is but half a crime. (beat) I'm a
myth. But I'm also just a man. And
a man needs a vacation from time to
time.

JOHN

And what better place than Geneva?

CLAIRE

And who better to vacation with
than your lover?

John shakes his head.

JOHN

Doctor.

CLAIRE

Who are you?

MARY

Well, we're happy to be here with
you. It's sure to be a lovely time.

CLAIRE

I'm happiest about it.

Claire grabs onto George's arm, to his dismay.

MARY

No, very honestly. I'm the
happiest. So glad to have someone
to occupy your time, Claire.

PERCY

Yes, yes. We're all so happy.
Geneva's lovely and George has had
sex with more wives than I have.

JOHN

Could I get some tea?

PERCY

Who are you?

MARY

Yes, this is shaping up to be a
very lovely time.

Outside we hear a CRACK of THUNDER. We see a burst of
lightening and then the kind of rain that would impress Noah.

PERCY

Oh yes. A lovely, lovely time.

END OF ACT ONE.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Percy stands near the window, looking at the rain. We see out
the window an outdoor worker fall down, knocked over by
rushing water. He seems to drown? At the very least, we don't
see the worker again. His hat drifts off in the wind.

PERCY

Well, George - Lord Byron - and...
I want to say... Jacques?

MARY

Jeff.

JOHN

John.

PERCY

Right. Jim. Well. Jim, George, I
think you better get to your home
across the lake before the rain
gets too bad.

Mary joins Percy at the window. Percy takes the moment to cup
her butt. She frowns.

MARY

(in an outraged whisper)
Percy!

Claire, still holding George's arm, moves his hand to her butt. He drops his hand. She tries to hold it there. We see their hands in battle. George wins and manages to get away. Claire raises her voice for the benefit of Percy and Mary who are not paying attention.

CLAIRE

Oh George! So naughty! Grabbing my bum in front of everyone!

Mary looks over but George is across the room, back on the couch. John gets up to look in the tea pot. No tea left.

JOHN

Could we get more tea?

CLAIRE

My bum! The liberties being taken!
In a drawing room! I cannot believe
no one is paying attention to this
singularly filthy situation!

Claire faints across the other couch. She opens one eye. No one is looking. She frowns and sits up.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I was a Drury Lane actress, you know!

GEORGE

A limerick!

CLAIRE

Please, no.

GEORGE

But yes! There one was an actress
named Claire/And on the stage she
was only... fair/But when the
curtain came down/All around town,
another performer cannot compare.

CLAIRE

Well, that's accurate. You're in Geneva, are you not?

GEORGE

As I said before: a man needs a vacation from time to time.

CLAIRE

With his lover.

JOHN

I'm his doctor, and I would just
like some tea.

Mary crosses from the window to sit with her step-sister.
George lights up, eager for an audience that isn't Claire.

MARY

I don't think that you should
leave. The rain is quite severe.

GEORGE

Athens! I was trapped in a
situation just like this. Spent a
week with a strong young farmer and
his very beautiful wife.

Percy turns from the window. He folds his arms.

PERCY

Free love is my domain.

GEORGE

Ha ha! Well, if the domain is but
yours is it truly free?

George leans back. Touché. He shoots finger guns at Percy.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Lord Byron.

JOHN

I'm going to find some tea.

John leaves.

CLAIRE

Oh thank god he's gone. He's so
tiring.

Everyone looks at Claire. Percy stands behind Mary and places
a proprietary hand on her shoulder.

PERCY

How long will your vacation be,
George? When are you planning to
return to England? Soon? Tomorrow?

GEORGE

Ready to see the back of me?

CLAIRE

I am.

MARY
Claire, we all know.

Claire straightens her skirts.

CLAIRE
Well, I'm just saying.

MARY
Maybe you can help Jorma find tea?

GEORGE
Capital! You two have so very much
in common.

George winks at no one.

CLAIRE
Fine! But I'll be back!

Claire exits.

GEORGE
Never! I'm never going back to
England. Not once!

Percy blanches and sits in Claire's abandoned seat.

PERCY
Never?

GEORGE
Ever.

MARY
That's too bad. We're only here for
the summer. But we'd love to have
you to our home.

PERCY
We would?

MARY
I think so. We both have enjoyed
his writings.

PERCY
Be that as it may...

GEORGE
Thrilling! I, of course, traversed
over the fine fields of Europe to
Switzerland to meet you. I am a
great admirer of yours.

Despite himself, Percy puffs up.

PERCY

Of course.

GEORGE

Of course.

PERCY

Well, at least you have fine taste in writing.

GEORGE

Our philosophies are not so different, I do believe! What is free love but the greatest philosophical revolution of our age?

PERCY

I could not have said it better myself!

GEORGE

Tosh! Balderdash! Glockenspiel! Bet you could! *Queen Mab*? I've read it to all my doctors.

Percy smoothes back his hair. He's comfortable again.

PERCY

Well, it is pretty good.

GEORGE

Indubitably.

PERCY

I have to tell you—I had you all wrong when you walked in just now. I thought you were here to seduce my wife.

George smiles indulgently.

GEORGE

Sir, I am and I am not. Hats! Do I wear them? Of course. And how! Wife seducer, reader, admirer, writer, director, sister sleeper, hero, doctor's traveling companion.

PERCY

And very similarly, I am a writer,
a reader, an admirer, a seducer, a
wife gatherer, a vegetarian, a
scoundrel, an angel.

Mary picks up her embroidery hoop again.

MARY

And I am a writer, a wife, a person
bored with this conversation, and
someone who is just reminding you
two men that I am, in fact, still
in the room.

Percy and George ignore Mary.

PERCY

What's say you and I take a walk?
I'd love hear more of Athens and
discuss my own travels.

GEORGE

Brilliant idea! Brilliant!

MARY

(frustrated)
Brilliant.

George and Percy exit. Mary goes at her stitching with more
anger than before. The rain continues to pour.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen is dark. A teakettle rests on a stove with a very
low flame. The shelves are filled with various dust-covered
earthenware containers. In the corner silently stands MARIA
JOSEF, a buxom maid with three teeth. She watches John move
about the kitchen but says nothing.

John busily attempts to locate tea leaves in the kitchen. He
doesn't notice Claire's entrance. Maria Josef does.

MARIA JOSEF

Out foul demon!

Claire hisses at Maria. John jumps back, hand to his heart.

JOHN

Oh! Didn't see you there. Could you
be so kind as to make us some tea?

MARIA JOSEF
For you? Yes. For the devil? No.

CLAIRE
Maria Josef is in love with Percy.

Maria Josef crosses herself and looks at the ceiling.

MARIA JOSEF
Dear Lord don't listen to this
wicked beast!

CLAIRE
OK, OK. Enough. Make the man tea.

JOHN
If you don't mind.

Maria Josef holds her fingers up in a cross at Claire, but proceeds to make the tea. Claire sits down on a stool at the kitchen table.

CLAIRE
I haven't seen you and George
together before.

JOHN
Doctors and patients don't often
attend the theater together.

CLAIRE
Naturally.

Maria Josef slides some tea towards Josef.

MARIA JOSEF
For you, sir. And you! (to Claire)
I hope the devil sees you soon!

Maria Josef exits with flouncing skirts. She whispers prayers under her breath.

CLAIRE
She's the worst. She finds me in
bed with Mary and Percy one time
and this... day and night.

JOHN
So it's true?

CLAIRE
That I have nightmares? Absolutely.
Terrible ones. I'm of a delicate
constitution.

JOHN
Naturally.

CLAIRE
Will you be with us the whole time?

JOHN
I am the man's doctor.

CLAIRE
Let me ask your opinion then. As a
man of science.

JOHN
Of course.

CLAIRE
How many times can a woman be
stymied in her quest for love
before she turns to murder?

John coughs as he tries to swallow her tea.

JOHN
Depends on the woman.

CLAIRE
Ah. That's what I thought.

Claire flounces out, leaving a very nervous John in her wake.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The library is a modest affair. A single wall is filled with bookshelves, which have books but not enough to fill the space. The walls are sparsely decorated with a few oil paintings. On one end of the room is a unlit fireplace.

Percy and George each hold glasses of port. They are now best friends. They cry with laughter as Percy finishes a story.

PERCY
And then she said, "I never knew
you went to Marrakesh!"

GEORGE
Ha! Moroccan mistaken identities!
Old boy, is there a better kind of
tale?

Percy gears up to agree or disagree.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I argue, there is not. If one were to ask me, and one should, what kind of tale ranks second, I would say an epic with a one-legged man.

PERCY

Oh! Oh?

GEORGE

A Welsh quatrain!

PERCY

Uh!

Percy clasps George's hand in a gesture of masculine solidarity, as well as to get around the oncoming limerick.

PERCY (CONT'D)

I cannot believe how much we have in common!

GEORGE

This friendship astounds me. Impresses me. I am tempted to write a poem about it, in fact.

PERCY

Do you know? I was about to say the very same!

GEORGE

Us learned men must stick together!

Percy giggles like a school boy.

PERCY

Learned yes, but not schooled. I was sent down at Oxford.

GEORGE

Smashing! Must have been one hell of a party! Did you get a goat? I have often say, "It isn't a party unless there's a farm animal."

George leans forward, ready to delve into the certainly hilarious party details that must get one expelled.

PERCY

Well... no. I was expelled for my positive views on atheism.

An awkward mood settles over the two of them.

GEORGE
Oh. Um. (beat) Fun.

PERCY
Yup.

GEORGE
So, should we go find your wife?

PERCY
Uh, sure. I did throw some wild
fetes at Oxford. I just want to
say. Big. Lots of sheep in
attendance.

GEORGE
Of course you did!

George pats Percy consolingly on the back as he leads them
out of the room.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mary holds her face in her hands. Her embroidery expresses
her mood. The thread is everywhere, connecting a flower at
the bottom of the hoop to one at the top.

Claire stomps around the room, head flung back. Her feet make
noise, even with the dampening nature of the thick pile of
the carpet.

John sits serenely, drinking a hot cup of tea.

CLAIRE
BORED.

Mary yells into her hands. She doesn't look up at her step-
sister as she throws out suggestions.

MARY
UGH. Why not try reading?

CLAIRE
BOOOOORING.

MARY
Needlepoint?

CLAIRE
I might develop calluses!

MARY
Take a walk?

CLAIRE
It's raining, Mary!

Claire looks at Mary. Mary looks up at Claire. Tensions are reaching a boiling point.

MARY
I meant indoors, Claire!

CLAIRE
There's nothing to see indoors that I haven't already seen!

Claire stomps over to Mary. They get closer as this conversation continues.

MARY
How can you be sure!

CLAIRE
I can be!

MARY
How!

CLAIRE
I just am!

MARY
Just leave me alone!

CLAIRE
So you want me to take a walk indoors and die of boredom? Or do you want me to take a walk outdoors and drown?

MARY
Either one!

CLAIRE
You are the absolute worst!

Percy and George enter. The awkward mood between them is gone, replaced again by the giddy masculine camaraderie of similar lifestyles and reading habits. Percy does not pick up on the vibe of the step-sisters, only noticing the proximity in which Mary and Claire stand.

PERCY
Getting along I see!

Percy puts his arm around Claire and pulls her down to sit on the couch. Claire curls into him, and smiles.

CLAIRE

Thank goodness you're back, Percy.
Mary was being *such* a bore.

PERCY

Was she? That doesn't sound like
you, Mary.

Mary rolls her eyes. George settles himself in beside her.
John grabs his teacup before anyone can get it.

MARY

I'm extremely boring. Ask anyone.

PERCY

Jeb? Is Mary boring?

JOHN

Incredibly so.

PERCY

Mary! Don't be boring. I already
have a boring wife. I don't need
two boring wives.

MARY

I'll work on it.

PERCY

Well, all your boredom is about to
vanish, my dears. George has had
the most amazing idea.

GEORGE

Of course I have! A poem!

CLAIRE

Ugh.

GEORGE

The rain does wash/An outdoor
ramble/But it does lead/To an
indoor gamble...

CLAIRE

I can think of things to do indoors
with you, George.

Everyone grimaces, George most of all. He ignores her.

GEORGE

You've thrown me off the meter!
Ugh.

JOHN
It was a good meter.

GEORGE
Thank you, doctor. Nevertheless!
Here is the announcement! Percy and
I think it would be a capital idea
to have a ghost story contest!

MARY
And?

PERCY
We each write a ghost story

CLAIRE
And...?

PERCY
Well... that's it. That's the whole
of the idea.

JOHN
What do we win?

Mary and Claire nod. What do they win? George looks at Percy.

GEORGE
Um...

PERCY
Uh...

GEORGE
Satisfaction! What greater
satisfaction can a man know than of
a job well done?

MARY/CLAIRE/JOHN
Peace./Love./International travel.

John, Claire, and Mary frown. George and Percy look pleased.

PERCY
Yes! This will be incredibly fun!

MARY
Yes, fun.

END OF ACT TWO.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary sits at a writing desk. A candle is next to her. She writes furiously. Behind her, we see the door to her dressing room is ajar. Light spills out from it.

Percy pokes his head through the door.

PERCY
Coming to bed, Mary?

Mary turns around. She's angry. Percy tries to smile.

MARY
Is Claire still in there?

PERCY
Um...

CLAIRE (O.S.)
You know I have nightmares! Just let me sleep with you two!

PERCY
She has nightmares...

Mary glares. Percy starts to pull the door shut as he pulls back.

PERCY (CONT'D)
See you in a bit then.

Mary says nothing.

PERCY (CONT'D)
OK...

Percy shuts the door. Mary's shoulders tense. A beat. He opens it a little. Mary's shoulders relax. She continues writing her letter.

MARY (V.O.)
Fanny, I write the following in jest. I just want to state that, for the record, in case a constable ever turns up at your door. But I may murder Percy and Claire. Both.

Mary pauses, and starts to cross out that sentence. But she shakes her head and moves on.

MARY (V.O.)
Percy has suggested a ghost story contest to amuse us.
(MORE)

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Due to the rain, we cannot venture out. But a ghost story contest????

She pauses and adds a couple more ??? for effect.

MARY (V.O.)

We spent the night reading German ghost stories with Lord Byron. Claire, of course, pretended to faint away out of fear. Lord Byron snuck out while she had her eyes closed!

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Earlier that day: Lord George Byron stands at the front of the room, holding a book. The rest (John, Mary, Percy, Claire) act as captive audience.

GEORGE

And so... they never saw him again.

George shuts the book. A beat, and then Claire jumps up from her seated position.

CLAIRE

Ah! So terrifying!!!

Claire pretends to faint. Lord Byron and John hustle out of the room as quickly as possible. They mime good-byes to the Shelleys. They shut the door behind them.

Claire opens her eyes and sits up. She pouts. She springs on Percy. He grimaces and tries to smile at Mary. Mary puts her finger across her throat in an "I'll kill you" message, and stalks out of the room. Claire bats her eyelashes at Percy.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

So terrifying!!!

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mary frowns as she remembers this. She shakes her head to clear it.

MARY (V.O.)

For now, Claire is Percy's problem. I swear to you, I shall get no time alone with my own husband on this vacation.

Mary tosses her head back in frustration.

MARY (V.O.)
And now I have to write something?
A nightmare, I tell you!

Percy pokes his head back into the room. He sneaks up on Mary. He leans down to whisper in her ear.

PERCY
Claire's asleep.

MARY
Ahhhh!

Mary turns around, startled. She smiles as she realizes it is just Percy. Percy grins. Mary frowns, as she sees Claire poke her head into the room. Percy frowns in response.

Claire rushes over to interrupt any developing romantic moment between the couple.

CLAIRE
Was it a ghost? Mary, were you
scared by a ghost? Poor Mary. Let's
go to bed. It is much too
frightening to be alone.

Mary glares at Percy. Percy shrugs. Mary lets herself be led out of the room.

MARY
Yes, who would ever want to be
alone?

END.