

## Frankenstein's Heirs

*Jens-Ulrich Davids*

The auditorium, as Peh saw through the slit between the curtains, was two thirds full. There had to be more than 200 people in the audience. His actors crowded in from behind so that they could look out, too; he all but fell into the curtain and rolled under it and off the stage, which would have sent him tumbling across the ramp and finally coming to rest at the feet of the first row of seats. That was where most of the former board of trustees were sitting now, like referees at a figure skating event. Would they grant him ten points, and thus the new job? In the second row he saw his favorite colleagues, those who had always attended his plays. He turned around.

“Oh man, all my housemates are sitting out there.”

“Well, sure, you gave them free tickets!”

“Let me have a look, too”, said Anton.

“Nobody will come for you anyway”, said Kit, “Or does Attac go to the theater?”

“You have no idea.”

Anton, Anton. The heartache and head worry that guy had caused him with his talk of revolution. But now, Peh thought, pacified, now everything was coming together harmonically. Anton had explicitly agreed, once again, not to level the differences, but not to let them affect things either. We'll deal with it after opening night, he had said, by then everything will have become clear. He stepped next to his monster actor.

“Everything alright, Mr Bodily Discord?”

Anton looked down at himself and pointed to his costume, smiling. Peh admired the overalls, by intention roughly seamed together, which fitted so closely that seen from a distance, they almost seemed like a skin. Full-body condom, they had said, that must feel weird with those seams. They only ever thought of the one thing, really. As for the head, Anton had shaved his hair and dyed the skin a grayish brown, and Anna had painted zigzagging scars on it which approximately followed the seams where the bones of the skull are joined by nature. The eyes lay deep in blue-black caverns, the mouth had been lengthened by lines almost to the ears, in a permanently horrible and at the same time angry and anxious smile; his hands were covered with ancient mangy fur gloves and his feet with ankle-high black rubber boots. The distorted smile, thought Peh, is that the mask or is it simply the way he is?

“Man”, said Peh, “You really look like serious disaster is within your powers.”

“Discord, disaster, all those dis-words, are you disturbed by my looks?”

“Have to be, don't I? After all, you're the monster.”

Fifteen more minutes left. They were assembled. Peh clapped his hands.

“Where’s the sparkling wine?”

Kit began to peel the red aluminum foil from the bottle’s neck. The group had insisted on Rotkäppchen, somehow they felt that was wonderfully creepy. They all stood in a circle and extended their open right hand forward. Peh got the salt out of his pocket and poured a little heap of it onto each palm. The bottle of wine, opened, was on the surgery table. Peh looked around the circle.

“Count to ten”, he said, “silently.”

They stood still and closed their eyes. The audience’s murmur and the scraping of chairs came in softly through the curtain. As if by agreement, they opened their eyes at the same moment.

“Fair winds and following seas”, they yelled, throwing the salt over their left shoulder and rubbing their hands clean.

“Wine!”

The bottle went from throat to throat, then Staffel put it away. They joined hands. Would they still remember the phrase they had chosen together from the script? It was already issuing from red mouths: “A different face would be nice, yours really is too ugly.”

Three minutes later high up on the balcony, Bobrowski put on the music for the last ten minutes before the start of the play.

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