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SF PERUSALS

Count Dracula

A Play in Three Acts

by Ted Tiller

Based on Bram Stoker's
Nineteenth Century Novel
Dracula

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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COUNT DRACULA, sound tape

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"COUNT DRACULA" was first produced by Stephen E. Hays at Stage West, West Springfield, Mass., on December 10, 1971, directed by John Ulmer, setting by Robert Federico, with William Guild as Stage Manager, and with the following cast:

(*In Order of Appearance*)

SYBIL SEWARD ..... *Diane Hill*
HENNESSEY ..... *Richard Larson*
DR. ARTHUR SEWARD ..... *John Wardwell*
RENFIELD ..... *Raymond Singer*
WESLEY ..... *Glen Lane*
JONATHAN HARKER ..... *Richmond Hoxie*
MINA ..... *Hannah Brandon*
COUNT DRACULA ..... *Eric Tavares*
HEINRICH VAN HELSING ..... *Jerry Hardin*

SCENE

Living quarters in Dr. Seward's Asylum for the Insane, north of London.

ACT ONE

An autumn evening in the first half of the Twentieth Century.

ACT TWO

Nearly midnight, three nights later.

ACT THREE

SCENE: 1: Twenty-eight hours later, before dawn.

SCENE 2: The Crypt at daybreak.

Count Dracula

ACT ONE

TIME: *An autumn evening in the first half of the Twentieth Century.*

SCENE: *Living quarters in Dr. Seward's Asylum for the Insane, north of London. The room has traces of Fifteenth Century Gothic architecture. Its stone columns and arches evoke a long gone yesterday. It has been modernized for the comparative comforts of the 1930's but it holds a darkness, brooding quality. It is a place where ghosts might walk. For less harrowing purposes it combines living room, library and office for Dr. Seward, his sister and his ward. The room is high above the ground, so high that neither treetop nor housetop is seen through the open French windows Up Center. Only the sky is visible, the horizon broken by Count Dracula's castle on a distant hill, silhouetted in the night with a solitary light burning in its tallest tower.*

There are gauze curtains and heavy, somber draperies at the French windows, each on traveler tracks controlled by drawstrings. Both pairs of curtains apparently are manipulated by actors onstage; then again they open mysteriously on their own—via unseen backstage crew. The French windows themselves open without visible aid at Count Dracula's will. Beyond the French windows a shallow balcony extends past their frames at both sides. The balcony railing is waist high and must be strongly braced *for it sees much action, some of it*

violent. Right of the windows is a fireplace with an impressive mantel and a grate of glowing coals. Over the mantel hangs a large oil portrait of somebody's rather formidable ancestor, circa 1885. The portrait is painted on scrim through which Count Dracula makes a ghostly appearance in Act Two.

There is a fire bench before the hearth and Right of the fireplace stands a tall wooden stool with rungs for Renfield. A triangular bar fits into the Up Left corner of the room. Bar has exposed upper and lower triangular shelves for glasses, bottles, Seltzer water, etc.

Downstage Left a flight of stairs without a handrail and with low risers, making it scarcely more than a gradual ramp, leads up to the outer hall and main entrance, to the dining room, Dr. Seward's laboratory, etc. A wide bookcase in the wall of Left stairway, near its lowest steps, is hinged at its Left side to swing open upstage for some of Dracula's nefarious activities. Late in the play the duplicity of this bookcase is discovered and used by Mina.

Down Right a stairway with normal risers, handrails at each side and a landing platform three steps up leads to family bedrooms above and to guest rooms. A tall, narrow bookcase is built into the wall of this staircase. There are a few practical books in both bookcases for Sybil; the rest are dummies. Matching brass plate light switches near each bookcase control all illumination; the chandelier, the wall sconces above mantel and elsewhere, the desk lamp, etc. A door opening offstage Down extreme Right leads to patients' rooms in the asylum, to quarters for the attendants and the kitchen.

Ancient stone columns rise from behind the foot of each staircase and support the largest arch across the room's center. Concealed behind the Right column and Right stairway wall is a low "jumping

off" platform for one of Dracula's more informal arrivals. Upstage, beyond the main archway, the walls are panelled. One panel, in Right wall near upstage Right corner is a "secret panel" and swings open offstage for Dracula's blackout exit in Act Two. In Act Three this panel is used for the startling cape escape with stage lights full up. It is vital that this secret panel be low *so that Count Dracula must duck down to go through it, and that it be* not much wider *than he. With such dimensions the panel makes possible (along with cape action described later) his vanishing right before the eyes of the audience.*

Right Center below fireplace there is a comfortable sofa of the period, faced downstage on a slight angle. Left of the sofa is an end table with ashtray, etc. Left Center, below the bar, is a mahogany desk with a high backed desk chair behind it. It is this chair which moves on its own when the "invisible" Dracula sits at the desk in Act Three. And the center seat cushion of sofa is rigged to depress when the unseen Dracula "sits" on it and to spring back to full plumpness when he "rises."

Between sofa and desk there is a graceful swivel chair, non-office type, lightweight enough for easy shifting. A black 1930's French cradle telephone without dial on desk's Left end; a low decorative desk lamp on its Right end; a silver cigarette box with silver lighter nearby; a small electric push button buzzer on upstage Right end of desk. Below the Left stairway is an old-fashioned hassock or tuffet. A further archaic touch is the bell cord hanging on the wall Right of mantel.

AT RISE: *Ghostly ORGAN MUSIC starts as the HOUSE LIGHTS DIM OUT. CURTAIN RISES in BLACKOUT. From the dark there comes an ear shattering SCREAM. Fast ORGAN*

GLISSANDO through top treble, then MUSIC OUT. A second SCREAM and STAGE LIGHTS COME UP FULL AND FAST. SYBIL SEWARD *is alone onstage out on the balcony, clutching the railing with both hands.* HENNESSEY, *a middling-young asylum attendant, runs on from Down Right. He is earnest, trim, hard working and pleasant.*

HENNESSEY. Miss Seward! What is it?

SYBIL. (*Enters from balcony gasping.*) Oh, Hennessey! I was leaning over the railing, watching for Mr. Harker's motorcar—and I almost fell. Such a fright! But don't tell Dr. Seward. (*Then, as a footnote.*) He's my brother.

HENNESSEY. (*Politely patient.*) Miss Seward, I know he's your brother.

SYBIL. Yes, I know you know, but I have to remind myself. I forget things. Things and people and places. Oh, well—! (*Shrugs, goes back to railing and leans over at a dangerous angle.*)

(SYBIL SEWARD *is somewhere in her late forties, but won't say where. She's a spinster, not neurotic, just addle-pated. She is vague, occasionally detached from reality and harmlessly touched in the head. Her hair is fussy, too girlish for her figure and done in one of the more unfortunate styles of the 1930's. Her bifocal glasses bounce on her bosom, suspended by an ornate chain round her neck. She wears her personal misconception of an evening gown.*)

HENNESSEY. (*Hurries to her.*) Please be careful. You'll lose your balance.

SYBIL. Oh, I lost that years ago. I was unbalanced as a child. . . . Not a sign of Mr. Harker's motor. It's possible he's been killed in an accident. Tsk, tsk! Who will tell poor Mina?

HENNESSEY. Come inside, Miss. You could fall straight down to that concrete driveway. (*Tugging her arm.*) Miss Seward, please! It's a two hundred foot drop.

SYBIL. (*Puts on bifocals, glances over rail.*) I would be rather messy, wouldn't I? . . . Well, just look at that!

HENNESSEY. What?

SYBIL. There, across the valley. Castle Carfax with only one light burning. So strange. Night after night, in the top tower, it's the only sign of life. (*As he leads her into room.*) Hennessey, if you were as rich as Count Dracula, wouldn't you burn more than one light?

HENNESSEY. (*Guiding her toward sofa.*) Well, Miss, he's in only one room at a time.

SYBIL. It's puzzling. He dresses too well to be a pinchpenny.

HENNESSEY. Now don't fret, Miss. Sit down and I'll get you a nice sherry. (*He seats her on sofa, goes to bar.*)

SYBIL. Good! Just the thing for my twitchy nerves. (*Removes bifocals, swings them so they hang down her back.*) I'll need more than a dollop of sherry to put Count Dracula out of mind. He worries me.

HENNESSEY. (*Opens decanter, pours.*) He worries many people, Miss. I grant you, foreigners have foreign ways, but people in the village are afraid of him.

SYBIL. Afraid? Why?

HENNESSEY. They think he's—different. Odd, you know.

SYBIL. (*Taking sherry from him.*) No, I don't. I find him charming. Beautifully polite. The villagers would do well to copy his manners.

HENNESSEY. (*Closes door Down Right.*) Perhaps, Miss, but they think it strange that he's never seen in the daytime. Only at night. (*He tidies desk, straightens books in Left bookcase as they talk.*)

SYBIL. He's not odd, he's just new hereabouts. (*Sip-*

ping sherry.) What matter whether he's seen at high noon or by moonlight? What distresses me is his living quite alone in that crumbling castle. I don't think he has servants.

HENNESSEY. None, Miss. The villagers won't work there. They say it's haunted.

SYBIL. How thrilling! (*A girlish laugh and she drains her glass, holds it out.*) Another sherry, please.

SEWARD. (*As he enters Down Left stairway.*) Not if you've had one already, Sybil.

SYBIL. (*Instant deflation.*) Oh, Arthur! You're such a spoil-sport. (*Thrusts glass at* HENNESSEY, *turns away pettishly.*)

SEWARD. Moderation, dear. Moderation's the thing. Besides, Hennessey has work to do and you have guests for dinner. (*He goes to her, adjusts her glasses so they hang over her bosom again.* DR. SEWARD *is a dignified, kindly, compassionate man in his mid-fifties. He wears black tie and dinner clothes.*) As I left the laboratory just now, Hennessey, I stopped by the dining room for a look at the table. Most attractive. My compliments.

HENNESSEY. Thank you, Dr. Seward.

SEWARD. (*To* SYBIL.) How is Mina?

SYBIL. (*Still annoyed.*) I haven't the slightest. I haven't seen her since lunch.

HENNESSEY. Miss Mina is a bit better, sir. Had good appetite when I took up her tea.

SEWARD. Oh? That's encouraging.

HENNESSEY. Let me fix you a highball, Doctor.

SEWARD. A small one. I'm on my way upstairs to see her now. (*While* HENNESSEY *blends whiskey and Seltzer water.*) Sybil, I wish you'd take more interest in Mina, especially now that she's so ill. She's your ward as well as mine.

SYBIL. I don't feel that, Brother. Whose signature is on the guardianship papers? Yours or mine?

SEWARD. Mine, but—

SYBIL. There, you see? I'm not important.

SEWARD. You loved her when she was a child, but now that she's grown—

SYBIL. I still love her—certain days of the week.

SEWARD. What do you mean, certain days?

SYBIL. Well, one week it's Monday-Wednesday-Friday; the next it could be Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday. I switch around. (*She rises, drifts to the window, looks out.*)

(*Both men look at her, then at each other in mild despair.* HENNESSEY *brings highball to* DR. SEWARD.)

SEWARD. Thank you. What do you suppose is keeping Mr. Harker?

SYBIL. He's dead on the highway.

SEWARD. (*Wheels to her in shock.*) *What?*

HENNESSEY. (*Softly.*) It's one of her pronouncements, sir.

SEWARD. Oh. (*Laughs.*) What a relief!

SYBIL. (*Comes down to him.*) Laugh if you like, but I have second sight.

SEWARD. Of course you have, dear, but sometimes it gets blurred through your bifocals. . . . Is Mr. Harker's room ready?

HENNESSEY. It is, sir, and Professor Van Helsing's. Let me check with you, Doctor. If Miss Mina feels strong enough to come downstairs for dinner, that will make it five at table?

SEWARD. I haven't counted noses. Let's see— (*Points to* SYBIL, *then to himself.*) One—two—and Mina and Harker and Van Helsing. Five. (HENNESSEY *nods, starts out Down Right.*)

SYBIL. Six.

SEWARD. How six?

SYBIL. (*Sits on sofa arm, swinging an abandoned leg.*) I invited Count Dracula.

SEWARD. Oh, *no!*

SYBIL. Oh, yes. He's the only Count in twenty miles and his visits lend us tone.

SEWARD. Well, too late to stop him. Six, Hennessey.

HENNESSEY. Yes, Doctor. I'll go set an extra place. (*Starts out Left this time and exits Up Left stairs.*)

(SEWARD *studies his sister a moment, sighs, goes to desk for cigarette.*)

SYBIL. (*Rising.*) Heigho! I think I'll have another sherry.

SEWARD. (*With a staying hand as she approaches bar.*) I think not. (SYBIL *pouts, flounces to sofa again and sits far Right end, her back to him.* SEWARD *lights cigarette, crosses to her.*) Sybil, I wish you hadn't invited Count Dracula. I don't like him—and he has an odd effect on Mina.

SYBIL. Of course he has. In his presence any red-blooded woman perks up. Why, even at my age, I— (*Touches her hair, then stops.*) He's mysterious and handsome and utterly Continental.

SEWARD. That's the facade. It's the man behind it I mistrust. There's something unwholesome about him which I can't quite— Have you ever shaken hands with him?

SYBIL. No, he always kisses my hand. No other man ever did. It makes me tingle.

SEWARD. Don't be absurd.

SYBIL. (*Hurt.*) There's nothing absurd about tingling. It's very pleasant.

SEWARD. I shook hands with him only once, the first time you brought him here. When was that?

SYBIL. Oh, a month ago. Shortly after he'd arrived in England.

SEWARD. I'll never forget that handshake. It was like ice. It was not the hand of a living man—more like the hand of the dead.

SYBIL. (*Rises after a horrified stare.*) Arthur, how dreadful! You're trying to make me dislike him.

SEWARD. Now, Sybil, dear—

SYBIL. Sh-hh! Wait. I heard a motorcar.

SEWARD. I didn't.

SYBIL. I have very sharp ears. (*She hurries to balcony.*)

SEWARD. (*To himself.*) And second sight—and a mind like a steel trap.

SYBIL. (*Looks down over balcony railing.*) Yes, it's Mr. Harker getting out of his car. I can't wait to meet him. My, isn't he handsome!

SEWARD. How can you tell? All you can see is the crown of his head.

SYBIL. Well— (*Another lean, another look.*) —he has a full head of hair, so he must be handsome. I'll take the elevator down and let him in. (*She starts for Left stairs.*)

SEWARD. And I'll tell Mina he's here. A fiance is exactly the medicine she needs.

SYBIL. Arthur, wouldn't it be wonderful if Mr. Harker and I got stuck in the elevator?

SEWARD. Sybil! What a thing to say.

SYBIL. What I mean is—it would be such an easy way for two strangers to break the ice. (*Innocently.*) Who knows? Trapped in the elevator, we could become intimate friends in five minutes.

SEWARD. (*Without rancor.*) Oh, Sybil, you're disgusting.

SYBIL. (*A quiet revelation.*) No, I'm not. I'm just lonely. (*She exits up Left stairs.* SEWARD *watches her go, then mounts Right stairs.*)

(*Before he is out of sight, door Down Right opens and* RENFIELD *starts in, sees Seward on stairs and quickly retreats into Right hall, flattening himself against the open door.* RENFIELD *is a schizophrenic inmate of indeterminate age, small stature and cadaverous complexion.* SEWARD *stops on stairs, glances back toward Right door, then shrugs and*

exits above. RENFIELD *slyly peeks around door frame, sees he is safe and laughs softly. Then, gibbering to himself, he slithers across the room, starts up Left stairs—but* VOICES *off Left make him freeze:*)

HENNESSEY. (*Off Left.*) Don't worry, Miss Seward. I'll be right here for the luggage when you bring Mr. Harker up. (*Then, as if to a small child:*) *T-h-e-r-e* you are. Now, push the Ground Floor button.

SYBIL. (*Off Left.*) Thank you. Last time I went right up to the roof. (*Suddenly a loud, clangorous institutional ALARM BELL sounds, continuing intermittently until cut-off cue.*)

HENNESSEY. (*Off.*) Watch it, Miss. Patient's escaped!

(*At the sound of the alarm bell,* RENFIELD *spins in terror, runs to French windows, darts through them, pulls them shut behind him, drops to his knees and crawls out of sight Left of windows.* HENNESSEY *enters Left, hastens down steps as* DR. SEWARD *appears on Right stair platform.*)

SEWARD. (*Loudly, above the bell.*) Another patient loose?

HENNESSEY. (*Shouting.*) Sounds like it, Doctor.

SEWARD. (*Calls toward off Right.*) Wesley! *Wesley!* Cut off that alarm! (*They both wait. The ALARM BELL STOPS. Then* SEWARD *starts down into the room.*) That's better. No sense in stirring up all the patients. Who is it this time?

HENNESSEY. I don't know, sir. I'll find out. (*Starts Down Right.*) Renfield, I'll wager.

SEWARD. Again? He escaped twice yesterday.

HENNESSEY. Twice is a low score for Renfield, sir. (*Stops en route.*) Last Thursday he made it four times. He's like a weasel. Sometimes it takes three of us to—

That's funny. Those windows were wide open a minute ago. Doctor, did you—?

SEWARD. I've not been near them. Do you suppose Renfield—?

HENNESSEY. (*Alarmed.*) Just what I'm thinking.

SEWARD. Oh, my God! If he's climbed over that railing— Quick! (*They run to windows.* HENNESSEY *gets there first, flings them open, hurries to railing and peers down. As he does,* RENFIELD *leaps from behind Left of windows, whirls* HENNESSEY *around and throttles him, bending him backward over railing.*) Renfield, stop! Stop that, for the love of God! (SEWARD *grabs* RENFIELD *and hurls him into the room where he cowers.* SEWARD *stands over him as* HENNESSEY, *choking and gasping, stumbles into the room.*) Do you want the strait jacket, Renfield? Shall I put you in solitary confinement?

RENFIELD. Oh, no, not that! Please, Doctor, not solitary!

SEWARD. Then get hold of yourself. Think! Hennessey is your friend, your keeper. He is good to you.

RENFIELD. (*Begins to sob, clutching* SEWARD *round the legs.*) No one is good to me. No one! I have no friends. No family—no hope—no future.

SEWARD. Now, now, none of that. Self pity only weakens a man. You've got to be strong.

HENNESSEY. (*Painfully massaging his neck.*) Oh, Doctor, not any stronger.

SEWARD. Hennessey, ring that buzzer on the desk. Get Wesley in here. One long buzz and three shorts—or is it the reverse? (HENNESSEY, *after another choking spasm, mutely holds up three fingers, then one, leans on desk and pushes buzzer.*) You've been improving a lot recently, Renfield. (*Lifts him to his feet.*) If you behave yourself and respond to treatment, who knows? In a year or two perhaps you can go home.

RENFIELD. (*Stops crying, wipes his eyes with his*

sleeve.) Home? I never had one. (*Turns abruptly, walks away to the fireplace.*)

SEWARD. But if you slip back into violence, as you did just now, it means—

RENFIELD. (*Sits hunched up on high stool by the fireplace.*) I know, Doctor. It means I descend further and further into madness. I don't know what happened. It was as though some evil voice told me to— Forgive me, Mr. Hennessey. I'm sorry, Doctor. I'll be good. Really I will. (*Begins bouncing on stool, sing-songs like a child:*) I'll be good, I'll be good. I'll be good, *good, GOOD!* (*Then hides his face in mantel corner.*)

(WESLEY, *a young attendant, makes a running entrance from Down Right.*)

WESLEY. You buzzed for me, Doctor?

SEWARD. Wesley, help Hennessey with Renfield. Get him back to his room. Now go along, Renfield. If you cooperate, we'll give you a reward. (*The two men ease a now placid* RENFIELD *from the stool and start Right with him.*) He's all right now.

HENNESSEY. Yes, sir, all right till next time.

RENFIELD. (*Stops, both feet planted.*) No, wait. Please wait. Dr. Seward, may I have my reward now?

SEWARD. Well—what would you like?

RENFIELD. Sugar. I'd like some sugar for my window sill.

SEWARD. Why?

RENFIELD. If I have to explain it, I don't want it.

HENNESSEY. He uses it to attract flies, sir.

SEWARD. Flies?

HENNESSEY. Tell him, Wesley.

WESLEY. Well, Dr. Seward, he catches flies and he eats them.

SEWARD. Good God!

WESLEY. Oh, he doesn't eat them all. Some he feeds to his spiders to fatten them up, and then—

SEWARD. (*Waits.*) And then?

WESLEY. Tell him, Hennessey.

HENNESSEY. He eats the spiders, sir.

RENFIELD. (*Begins to laugh.*) Yes, yes! I eat them. They are bits of life. They make me strong. Their little drops of blood give me *power.* (*Shouting.*) *Power over my enemies!* (*Instantly he tries to fight free of* HENNESSEY *and* WESLEY. *They tighten their holds and drag him off Down Right, thrashing, kicking, screaming.*)

SEWARD. (*Sits on desk edge, head in his hands.*) Poor devil. How can I help him?

SYBIL. (*Trills from off Left.*) This way, Mr. Harker, and we'll have a drink to toast our meeting! (*She enters Left, sees* SEWARD *and stops dead on the stairs. Her ingenue voice drops an octave.*) Oh, *Arthur!* I thought you were upstairs. (*Recovers, starts down steps.*) Mr. Harker is here and he's a perfect lamb!

(*As* DR. SEWARD *rises, comes forward and dons the host's welcoming smile—*JONATHAN HARKER *enters Left with briefcase and a commodious overnight case. He wears an impeccable business suit, is young, likable, muscular and glows with good health.*)

JONATHAN. Well, not quite a lamb, Miss Seward. More likely the family black sheep. (*Descending, puts luggage down, goes to* SEWARD *with hand outstretched.*) Good evening, Dr. Seward. Glad to see you again, sir.

SEWARD. (*Through handshake.*) Not one tenth as glad as I am to see you. I count on you to be the elixir to make Mina well.

JONATHAN. How is she?

SEWARD. (*Hedging.*) Oh, better. A bit better today.

SYBIL. I disagree. She looks worse. If you ask me, she's sinking fast.

JONATHAN. *Doctor!*

SEWARD. Pay no attention. Here, why don't you—

JONATHAN. (*Cuts in.*) I'd like to see her, please. Your telephone call of last night has worried me ever since, and now, what your sister says makes it sound—May I go up to her?

SEWARD. In a moment. I must talk to you first. (*Leads him up to bar.*) Here, mix yourself a drink. You need it after that long drive from London. . . . Sybil, shouldn't you make a last minute check in the dining room? (*Nods meaningfully to Left.*)

SYBIL. (*Settling on sofa.*) There's nothing to check. Hennessey did everything. All I was allowed to do was roll the napkins.

(JONATHAN *obediently mixes himself a drink he does not want, his attention divided between his host and his unusual hostess.*)

SEWARD. (*In full control, but in italics.*) Well, please go *somewhere* and do *something!* I want to speak to Jonathan privately. Go give us some music on the organ.

SYBIL. I can't. The keys are sticky.

SEWARD. How do you mean—sticky?

SYBIL. Well, yesterday I was playing a bit of Bach with my right hand— (*She waits.* JONATHAN *pauses in his mixing.*)

SEWARD. Yes?

SYBIL. And eating a jelly sandwich with my left— (*She shrugs.*)

SEWARD. I see. I'll get Wesley to clean the keyboard.

SYBIL. The jelly is mostly in the bass. (*Studies her hands a moment, then looks up brightly.*) Perhaps, if I put on gloves— (JONATHAN *lowers his drink in astonishment.*)

SEWARD. (*Takes* SYBIL'S *arm, gets her to her feet.*) Sybil, please. Go upstairs. Tell Mina Jonathan is waiting and help her dress for dinner. (*He propels her toward Right stairs.*)

SYBIL. (*Affronted.*) It appears we must all be your

minions! *Do* excuse me, Mr. Harker. (*She sweeps grandly up the steps and exits.*)

SEWARD. (*After a moment.*) I don't know whether Mina ever told you about my sister or not.

JONATHAN. A little. She said there were times when Miss Seward was—not quite herself.

SEWARD. Not-quite-herself. How kindly you put it. (*Turns, looks up Right stairway.*)

JONATHAN. (*A short embarrassed pause.*) Let me fix you a drink, Doctor.

SEWARD. No. We must talk of Mina—but have your own, of course.

JONATHAN. I don't really want it, sir. Please! Is she better or—? (SEWARD *indicates that* JONATHAN *sit on sofa, then pulls small swivel chair over and sits nearby.*)

SEWARD. Mina's spells of unaccountable weakness began one evening about a month ago. We'd had a guest for dinner— By God, the same unwelcome man who's dining here tonight! (*Glances over his shoulder toward castle.*)

JONATHAN. Who?

SEWARD. Oh, a foreign Count poor Sybil thinks she's enamored of. Bogus, I'm sure. . . . Anyway, after dinner, he asked Mina to show him our rose garden. When they returned she was obviously ill. Her eyes were glazed. She faltered when she walked, she complained that her throat hurt badly and she felt very weak. Sybil put her to bed while I got rid of the Count— No, wait. I don't remember his actual departure. (*Rises, goes to windows, looks off for a moment at the castle.*) How absurd. I was distracted by Mina's condition, of course, but come to think of it, it's as though he just melted from sight. . . . Well, that's nonsense. (*Comes down to desk.*) Would you like a cigarette?

JONATHAN. (*Shaking his head.*) Was she all right the next morning?

SEWARD. (*Getting cigarette for himself.*) No. It took two days for her to recover. She was fine for several

days, then it happened again. Each time this strange lethargy would overcome her. It was hard to rouse her from sleep, to get her to eat, to hold her attention. The symptoms are those of anemia, but her illness is not anemia. It's baffling—and beyond my medical knowledge.

JONATHAN. How many attacks has she—?

SEWARD. Six, in four weeks. (*Sits, unlighted cigarette idle in his hand.*) I've had specialists up from London, she's had every test known to modern science, all without satisfaction. We have a hundred questions; no solutions.

JONATHAN. (*With no attempt at humor.*) I've changed my mind about that drink. (*Rises, gets his glass from bar.*) Six attacks? How many times has this Count—er—?

SEWARD. Dracula. Count Dracula. That's his castle across the valley. (*As* JONATHAN *goes to windows to look, the castle TOWER LIGHT FLICKERS RAPIDLY.*)

JONATHAN. Where the tower light is flickering? (*TOWER LIGHT GOES OUT.*) I mean—where it just went out?

SEWARD. (*Turns in swivel chair.*) It's out? God, that means he's on his way. (*Lights cigarette.*) He's an expatriate of Transylvania, wherever that may be.

JONATHAN. The Carpathian Mountains, I believe. (*Comes down with his drink.*) Has he seen Mina often? Perhaps visited here before these attacks?

SEWARD. Oh, he's turned up unexpectedly two or three evenings. I don't remember. Why?

JONATHAN. I'm clutching straws, of course, but—(*Sits, leans toward* SEWARD.) could there be any connection?

SEWARD. Between the Count and her illness? How could there be? If she were a romantic young thing, pining away with a school-girl crush, yes, possibly. I wish it were that simple. . . . Jonathan, I know you

love her, your engagement has been announced, you plan to marry—

JONATHAN. In six weeks.

SEWARD. All of which makes it most difficult to tell you—

JONATHAN. (*A pause. Slowly puts his drink down on end table.*) To tell me—?

SEWARD. These spells, each progressively worse, could prove fatal.

JONATHAN. Mina! (*He goes quickly to Right stairs, looks up, turns to* SEWARD.) Then she is in great danger.

SEWARD. (*Nods assent.*) I've hesitated to tell you the most frightening aspect, but you must be told. A young friend of Mina's, Lucy Westenra, a girl just Mina's age and with exactly the same symptoms, died last week.

JONATHAN. (*Slowly approaches* SEWARD.) Where?

SEWARD. In this county, two miles away. We don't know yet, but it's possible—just possible, mind you—that Lucy Westenra's case and Mina's could be the beginning of an epidemic.

JONATHAN. (*Grips him by the arms.*) Dr. Seward, my God, my God! What can we do?

SEWARD. (*Disengages* JONATHAN'S *hands, puts an arm about his shoulder.*) First, we can't afford panic. (*As* JONATHAN *starts away,* SEWARD *detains him.*) Listen to me! Lucy was frail and tubercular all her life. She lacked the stamina to fight back. But Mina has had blooming health since babyhood. She—

JONATHAN. (*Suddenly breaks, his face averted.*) Doctor, if we lose her I shall die.

SEWARD. (*Leads him to sofa, sits by him.*) Now, now, we won't lose her. The man who can save her arrives here tonight. He's my old friend, Professor Heinrich Van Helsing.

JONATHAN. (*Turns so* SEWARD *won't see him dry his eyes with his fists.*) Van Helsing? The Dutch specialist?

SEWARD. The same. We graduated from medical college together. Today he's one of the world's foremost authorities on rare diseases. I sent him Mina's full medical report and Lucy Westenra's case history. Last night he phoned from Amsterdam that he was on his way. He's known Mina since she was a child and—

JONATHAN. (*One hand up to interrupt him.*) *Can* he save her?

SEWARD. (*A barely perceptible hesitation.*) I stake my life on it.

SYBIL. (*Off Right upstairs.*) Careful, dear. You haven't been downstairs in three days. Slowly now, Mina. Slow-*ly!* (JONATHAN *rises, goes to staircase.* SEWARD *returns swivel chair to original position.*)

(MINA *appears descending the Right stairs, her progress hindered by* SYBIL'S *death grip. Despite illness and pallor,* MINA MURRAY *is a most attractive young woman, becomingly gowned in a long flowing chiffon, low cut evening dress of striking hue. Her abundant hair is piled high, her earrings are both simple and elegant. At her neck she wears an old fashioned cameo on a wide velvet "choker" which matches her gown and conceals the lower part of her throat.*)

MINA. Jonathan, dear!

JONATHAN. Mina! You look beautiful, darling! Not sick at all.

MINA. I feel fine. Just a little weak.

JONATHAN. (*Takes her arm.*) Here, let me help you.

MINA. No, truly, I don't need help.

SYBIL. Yes, she does. If I let go, she'd slump right to the floor!

JONATHAN. I have her, Miss Seward. Sit here, darling. (*He guides* MINA *into Right corner of the sofa. As he goes above sofa to come around and sit by her,* SYBIL *crosses below sofa, plops herself down at* MINA'S *Left side, leaving* JONATHAN *neatly thwarted.*)

SEWARD. (*Tries to catch* SYBIL'S *eye.*) Oh, Sybil?

SYBIL. (*Spreading her gown, taking up more room.*) Yes, Brother?

SEWARD. Nothing. (JONATHAN *gets tuffet from downstage Left, carries it to Right of sofa, sits on it near* MINA. SYBIL *watches affably, unaware that she is a cul-de-sac for Cupid.*)

SYBIL. Now, everybody comfy? . . . You're right, Mr. Harker. She does look well. (*Puts on her bifocals and studies* MINA.) Oh, I see. It's make-up.

SEWARD. Sybil, *come have a sherry!*

SYBIL. (*Instantly on her feet.*) Oh, jolly! I was just beginning to flag a bit. (*She goes to bar where* SEWARD *gives her a sherry and a glare.* JONATHAN *moves over, sits by* MINA, *patting her hand affectionately.* SYBIL *starts back toward sofa but is detoured by* SEWARD *into the swivel chair.*)

JONATHAN. I've been terribly worried about you.

MINA. No need, darling. Now that you're here, just watch me astound the medical profession. It will be known as The Mina Murray Cure, or Instant Recovery.

JONATHAN. (*Laughing, embraces her.*) Oh, dearest, dearest Mina!

SYBIL. (*Squinting at wristwatch.*) I wonder if Count Dracula has stepped into a quagmire?

SEWARD. Why on earth would he?

SYBIL. Well, he *could,* you know, if he walked through the woods. He's late.

MINA. (*Gets out of* JONATHAN'S *embrace, sits forward, spine erect, staring oddly.*) But he *is* coming?

JONATHAN. Mina, what is it? You like this man?

MINA. (*A moment.*) No. He fascinates me, but I don't like him.

JONATHAN. (*After a puzzled glance at* SEWARD.) Oh, I almost forgot. I brought you a present. (*Goes to briefcase, takes out oblong plush jewelry box.*)

SYBIL. Oh, how nice! (*Under her breath to* SEWARD:) Is today Mina's birthday?

SEWARD. (*Patting her shoulder.*) No, dear.

JONATHAN. Here, darling.

MINA. A jewel case! Oh, Jonathan, you've done something you shouldn't.

JONATHAN. I don't know why not. It's just another way to say I love you. Go on, open it.

MINA. (*Lifts out a triple strand of pearls.*) Jonathan! They're *exquisite!* (*Murmurs of approval from* SYBIL *and* SEWARD. JONATHAN *steps behind sofa, reaches for clasp of* MINA'S *velvet choker.*)

JONATHAN. Dear, let me take this off. Let's see how they look on you.

(SOUND: *Fade in DOGS HOWLING in distance.*)

MINA. (*Covering throat with both hands.*) No! *Don't!*

JONATHAN. But, darling, why not?

MINA. I mean not now. Not—not in this dress. Pearls don't really go well with— *Tomorrow!* Tomorrow I'll—I'll wear a different gown for dinner and they'll— They're lovely, Jonathan, and I thank you—but don't ask me to put them on. Not yet. When I'm really well, I'll— (*She begins to cry.*)

(SOUND: *DOGS HOWLING grows LOUDER.* SEWARD *and* SYBIL *glance toward window but do not move.*)

JONATHAN. (*Sitting quickly, cradles her.*) Of course, Mina. Of course you don't have to wear them now. Here, darling. (*Gives her his breast pocket handkerchief.*)

MINA. I'm shivering. Hold me close, Jonathan. There's a cold wind blowing round me.

SYBIL. (*Rises, starts Left.*) Perhaps the hall window is open.

SEWARD. It isn't. Please get her a shawl, Sybil.

(SYBIL *turns, starts toward Right stairs. ALL LIGHTS FLICKER OFF and ON rapidly, then ON AGAIN. Involuntarily everyone looks up at chandelier.*)

(SOUND: *HOWLING INCREASES and seems NEARER, a great melancholy chorus, deep throated, sustained and terrifying.*)

MINA. Listen!

SYBIL. (*Stopped on first step.*) It's as though every dog for miles around is—is trying to warn us. Arthur, you remember mother's superstition about dogs howling in the night? She said it meant someone nearby—would die before morning.

MINA. (*Pushing free of* JONATHAN, *leans forward, staring again.*) No, they're wolves. They sound like wolves! (MINA *rises as though mesmerized, moves slowly to the windows and stands motionless, looking out.*)

JONATHAN. (*Following her.*) There are no wolves here, Mina darling.

MINA. How still it is down there. Not a leaf stirring. Sybil is right. It's like death.

(SOUND: *The HOWLING begins to FADE AWAY, overlapped and replaced by EERIE MUSIC of The Dracula Leitmotif. ALL LIGHTS FLICKER AGAIN and GO OUT, leaving only the glow from the fireplace and a dim light from Left hallway, spilling down the stairs.*)

SYBIL. (*Frightened, goes to* SEWARD.) Arthur! What is it?

SEWARD. (*Crossing below her to Right.*) The electric power. Don't be alarmed. I'll try the switch. (*He flicks wall switch by Right bookcase several times.*) Nothing. It must be the main fuse.

(*MUSIC SWELLS as* COUNT DRACULA *enters at top of Left stairway, his shadow rippling down the*

steps. His countenance is arresting, lupine, cruel and coldly handsome. He is immaculately attired in white tie and tails. Over his shoulders is an evening cape of costly black satin lined with vibrant red silk and with a stiff, high standing collar which frames his head. DRACULA *holds his silk opera hat inverted in one hand and drops his white kid gloves into it with a gesture that is the quintessence of arrogance. When he speaks his accent is slightly Continental and his voice not only insinuates but threatens.*)

DRACULA. (*A mocking bow.*) Good evening. (*MUSIC DIES OUT. They all turn to him in surprise and* MINA *comes away from the windows, looking at him fixedly.*)

SEWARD. (*Holds near Right bookcase.*) Good evening. (*As* DRACULA *comes down the steps,* SYBIL *crosses to him.*)

SYBIL. Count Dracula, how good of you to come. We're sorry about the lights.

DRACULA. The lights?

SYBIL. They seem to have quite gone out. Quite.

DRACULA. (*Kissing her hand.*) What matter? You illuminate the room. (*He looks at the chandelier, makes the most casual of gestures toward it and instantly ALL STAGE LIGHTS COME UP FULL.*)

SYBIL. Oh, good! *There* they are. Now why do you suppose they went off?

DRACULA. (*Shrugs.*) Perhaps a case of temporary electrical indisposition. (*Puts silk hat with gloves on desk, crosses to* MINA, *bends over her hand and kisses* it.) My dear Miss Murray, how beautiful you are tonight. You are a feast—for the eyes.

MINA. We—we are honored to have you with us.

DRACULA. It is I who am honored, to be your guest and that of the eminent Doctor and his interesting sister. And this gentleman—?

MINA. Is my fiance. Count Dracula, may I present Mr. Jonathan Harker?

JONATHAN. (*Holds out his hand.*) How do you do?

DRACULA. (*Ignores the proffered hand.*) Ah, yes. The young architect.

JONATHAN. (*Mild surprise.*) How did you know? Did Mina—?

MINA. No. I never mentioned it. (*All four look at him curiously.*)

DRACULA. I surmised. You look like an architect, Mr. Harker. You yourself are so symmetrically built.

SEWARD. Sybil, take Count Dracula's cape and hat, please. Hang them in the hall while I fix him a drink. (SYBIL *starts immediately for* DRACULA, *arms raised to remove his cape.*)

DRACULA. If you will permit me, Doctor— (*Gracefully steps aside, dodging the oncoming* SYBIL.) *and* Miss Seward, I'll retain the cape. There's a chill in the autumn air. As for the libation, thank you, no. I never drink—socially. (SYBIL *gets his hat and gloves from the desk.* DRACULA *gives her a lordly wave of dismissal. She all but curtseys, floats up the Left stairs, hat clutched to her bosom, and exits.* DRACULA *moves to French windows, stands in profile looking out.* JONATHAN *goes to* MINA, *reaching for her hand but she draws away.*)

MINA. Don't, Jonathan. Not now. (*She crosses to fireplace, watching* DRACULA, *leaving* JONATHAN *puzzled and hurt.*)

DRACULA. What an interesting vista. From here my castle looks like a huge, crumbling tombstone.

SYBIL. (*Enters Left stairs, descends breathlessly.*) Arthur, there's a car coming up the drive. I spotted it through the hall window.

SEWARD. (*Starts for French windows.*) Good. It's bound to be my old friend from Holland.

SYBIL. Professor—

SYBIL AND DRACULA. (*Together.*) Heinrich Van

Helsing. (*Though they started in spoken duet,* DRACULA *finishes the name alone,* SYBIL'S *voice having faded away in her astonishment.*)

SEWARD. Why—yes.

DRACULA. (*As though searching memory.*) In a rather ancient motorcar which he keeps in London—for his frequent trips from Amsterdam—to confer with your English specialists.

SEWARD. Why, how— Are you clairvoyant? (DRACULA *smiles, shakes his head.*) How do you know these things?

DRACULA. Merely a hobby. I collect facts, trivial or momentous, and store them away for future use.

SEWARD. I see. Excuse me. I'll go let him in. (SEWARD *crosses to Left stairs, stops part way up for another look at his baffling guest, then exits above.* DRACULA *steps out onto balcony, holding out the edges of his cape at the railing, making him resemble a great black bat blotting out the sky. Trance-like,* MINA *moves closer to the windows watching him.*)

SYBIL. Mr. Harker, I'll ring for an attendant to take your luggage upstairs. (*She starts toward bell cord.*) You must want to change for dinner.

JONATHAN. (*Half hears, studying* MINA.) To change?—Oh, yes, of course. Don't bother to ring, Miss Seward. (*Getting his luggage.*) I'll take my things up myself. Which room is it?

SYBIL. It's at the end of the passage. It— I'd better show you. You might get it mixed up with the linen closet. (*She notices jewelry case and pearls on sofa, scoops them up.*) You may as well take these along. I don't believe Mina likes your gift. Pity. (*She sails ahead of him, starts up Right stairway.*)

JONATHAN. (*Another glance at* MINA *whose back is to him.*) Perhaps not. She's behaving very strangely.

SYBIL. Oh, this is one of her *good* days. Come along, Mr. Harker. (SYBIL *beckons with the jewel case, exits above and* JONATHAN *follows her with luggage. In-*

stantly DRACULA *whirls and faces* MINA. *His movement is so sudden she draws back with a gasp.*)

DRACULA. Ah, Miss Murray, we are alone. How opportune. (*Takes her hand, leads her toward sofa.*) You seem perturbed, my dear. I want you to sit down, empty your mind of all trepidation.

MINA. (*Slowly pulls her hand free, starts toward desk chair.*) I'll—I'll sit here, Count Dracula.

DRACULA. (*Takes her by both hands, gently but inexorably leads her to sofa, seats her.*) Please. I know what is best for a lovely convalescent. T-r-u-s-t me, my dear. Relax. Lean back and close your eyes. (*His voice, his hypnotic eyes have a mesmeric effect on* MINA. *She does exactly as told.* DRACULA *gives the chandelier a glance and a casual gesture and ALL LIGHTS GO OUT except fire glow, faint off stage hall lights and the feeble light of distant stars. OMINOUS MUSIC begins softly. He looks down triumphantly upon the unseeing* MINA, *glides to above sofa and stands directly behind her.*) There, that's better, isn't it? The gloom is soothing to your beautiful, tired eyes. (*Adjusts her head, unfastens her neck band and cameo.*) Let me remove this velvet choker. It is constrictive and conceals your lovely throat.

MINA. (*Weakly, her protesting hands go to her throat.*) No, no—

DRACULA. Sh-hh! You must be absolutely still. You must rest. R-e-l-a-x. (*He drops choker on floor behind sofa, murmuring hypnotically:*) You are going to sleep —to sleep—a quiet, dreamless sleep. You are floating, drifting through space—now you are falling, slowly, slowly—falling into oblivion! (MINA *gives a little sigh and her head rolls to one side. She is asleep. MUSIC SURGES slightly and* DRACULA *begins to laugh. Then he bares his teeth in a hideous grin, slowly lowers his head toward* MINA'S *throat, his jaws working like an animal salivating over raw meat. Just as he is above her throat,* HENNESSEY *enters Left stairs with a small re-*

freshment tray, snaps on wall switch by Left bookcase on his way down steps. STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL. MUSIC OUT. With a snarl of fury, DRACULA *leaps back.*)

HENNESSEY. (*Offering tray.*) Canapes, sir?

DRACULA. (*A thunderclap of contempt.*) *Canapes! (He wheels, strides out onto balcony, stands breathing heavily, livid at the interruption.* HENNESSEY *starts toward* MINA *with tray, sees she is asleep, puts tray on desk. He moves tuffet from Right of sofa to downstage of desk and goes up Left steps quietly and exits.* MINA *stirs, sits up with effort, palms pressed to her brow.*)

MINA. What a horrible dream!

DRACULA. (*Turns.*) A dream?

MINA. A nightmare. I dreamed that I was powerless, unable to defend myself—as a giant bat was about to attack my throat—and draw my blood.

DRACULA. How interesting. You've had this dream before?

MINA. Yes, several times. That's what frightens me. I feel as though it is not a dream—but real.

DRACULA. The subconscious mind is often overactive. (MINA'S *hands go to her throat. She discovers the velvet choker is missing, looks for it on the sofa, then rises frantically.*)

MINA. My cameo and velvet band! They're gone.

DRACULA. An heirloom, no doubt? What a pity. (*As* MINA *searches downstage of sofa,* DRACULA *smiles evilly and walks out of sight Left on balcony.* MINA, *without seeing him depart, looks above sofa, finds choker on floor. With trembling fingers she is trying to fasten it around her neck as* DR. SEWARD *enters on Left stair platform carrying an old battered suitcase and a venerable Gladstone bag. He is followed by* PROFESSOR HEINRICH VAN HELSING *whose attire is as outdated as his luggage.*)

SEWARD. Mina! Look who's here!

VAN HELSING. Ah-h-h, dear little Wilhelmina! How

long has it been? (MINA, *nervously holding choker with left hand to conceal her throat, extends her right hand as* VAN HELSING *approaches. He surprises her with an embrace instead of a handshake and she drops choker.* VAN HELSING *releases her, then holds her at arms' length.*) You've grown into a beauty, as I predicted. Remember, Arthur? When she was a knee-high ugly duckling I prophesied a swan. (*He stands back to look at her.* MINA *stoops to pick up choker but he cups her chin, lifts her to full height and studies her face:*) You're pale, of course, but one of those rare, lucky women on whom pallor is an adornment. It makes your skin translucent. (HEINRICH VAN HELSING *is a few years older than* DR. SEWARD, *a genial, warmhearted man except when crossed over an issue he deems important. Then geniality is replaced by sternness. His tie is askew, his suit, like his hair, is rumpled and it's a safe bet there's no tuxedo in his luggage.*)

MINA. (*Abstractedly.*) Dear Professor Van Helsing, it's good to see you again.

SEWARD. I'll send your luggage upstairs, Heinrich, and you can change for dinner.

VAN HELSING. Change? I brought no change. This is it! I put a napkin here— (*Tucks finger in collar.*) and I am ready. (SEWARD *smiles, puts luggage below desk.* MINA *starts to stoop for choker but* VAN HELSING *anticipates her and picks it up.*) Ah, this cameo is old. Was it your mother's?

MINA. (*Reaching for it.*) Yes. I inherited it when she—

VAN HELSING. Let me put it on for you. (MINA *turns for him to fasten it at the back of her neck, but he turns her round to face him again.*) No, face me. Face me. I want to see you when I talk. And take your hands away from your throat. They're in my way. . . . Ah, your pretty mother. You were too young to even remember her when she died, but I remem— (*Stops, looks closely at base of her throat, draws back with a*

hissing intake of breath. Instantly MINA'S *hands cover her throat again.*)

SEWARD. What's wrong?

VAN HELSING. (*Moves her hands aside, looks more closely, separates her now clenched hands and drops choker into them.*) Sit down, Wilhelmina. We must talk.

MINA. No, Professor, *no!* Not now! Later—after dinner, or—

VAN HELSING. (*Quietly.*) *Now,* Wilhelmina. (*He sits on sofa, draws* MINA *down beside him.*)

SEWARD. What's the matter?

VAN HELSING. At the moment, merely a suspicion as to what ails your pretty ward, an explanation for this anemia that is not anemia. . . . Mina, my dear, since when have you had those two little wounds at the base of your throat?

MINA. A—a few days. Last week, perhaps. . . . I don't remember. (SEWARD *pulls swivel chair near sofa, sits looking from one to the other. Unnoticed by any of them,* DRACULA *appears at the open windows and listens intently, scowling.*)

VAN HELSING. And how did you get these two little wounds? (*Still unobserved,* DRACULA *steps into the room, his look concentrated on* MINA. *He pantomimes putting on a neck scarf, fastening it with a pin.* MINA, *who has been nervously twisting her hands, stops. Her face lights up with relief; she has received the thought transference.*)

MINA. It was an accident. I was fastening my scarf with a brooch which has a long, very sharp pin and—

VAN HELSING. I should like to see that brooch with that long, sharp pin. (DRACULA'S *face contorts with anger. He steps toward the Professor, his hands claw-like, reaching out, but he stops, again concentrating his attention on* MINA.)

MINA. (*As though just recalling.*) I'm afraid I've lost it.

VAN HELSING. I see.

SEWARD. Is it important?

VAN HELSING. The pin, no. The little wounds, yes. (DRACULA *now extends one hand toward* MINA, *then toward Right stairs and back to her. She rises slowly, her voice little more than a whisper:*)

MINA. Please, will you excuse me? I must go upstairs and rest a little before dinner. (*As she mounts Right stairway and exits, the two men follow to base of steps and watch her off.* DRACULA *moves as silently as a jungle cat and leans against column at base of Left stairs, arms folded, cape enshrouding all but his mocking face.* SEWARD *and* VAN HELSING, *still at Right stairs looking after* MINA, *do not yet see him.*)

VAN HELSING. She is lying. No brooch, no long sharp pin caused those wounds.

SEWARD. But, Heinrich, they are just tiny white dots.

VAN HELSING. With little red centers. You saw? Yes, but you don't know what caused them. None of your London specialists could tell you. But *I* will tell you— (*Stops as he sees* DRACULA.) We have an eavesdropper.

DRACULA. (*Smiles urbanely.*) Dr. Seward, won't you introduce us?

SEWARD. Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't hear you come in.

DRACULA. Evidently.

SEWARD. (*Bringing* VAN HELSING *toward him.*) Count Dracula, may I present my old friend, Professor Heinrich Van Helsing.

DRACULA. Good evening, Professor.

VAN HELSING. Good evening. (*Neither makes a move to shake hands.*) I know your name.

DRACULA. You flatter me.

VAN HELSING. Not really. There was an infamous Count Voivode Dracula who ruled Transylvania in the Fourteenth Century.

DRACULA. Possibly an ancestor. . . . Infamous, you say?

VAN HELSING. A descendant of Atilla the Hun. Some historians claim he was a Vampire.

DRACULA. (*A moment, then a polite smile.*) What an unusual occupation.

(SYBIL *starts down Right stairs carrying a small ostrich feather fan which clashes with her dress. She turns, calls back up:*)

SYBIL. Come along, Mr. Harker. We must let her rest.

JONATHAN. (*Off Right.*) Be right down, Miss Seward.

SYBIL. Dr. Van Helsing—I mean, Professor. How nice to see you. I can never remember whether to call you Doctor or Professor.

VAN HELSING. (*Patting her hand kindly.*) Try them alternately. I'm bound to respond to one or the other.

SYBIL. Count Dracula, I hope you won't mind if dinner's delayed? Mina has to rest a bit longer.

DRACULA. Don't be concerned. Food interests me not at all. Generally I— (*Searching for the word.*) sup much later.

VAN HELSING. I mind. I'm famished.

SYBIL. Come along, then, have some canapes. They're quite fattening. (*She leads him to hors d'oeuvre tray on desk. As he reaches for food, she whips feather fan open, rapidly swishes it above canapes.*) Oh, dear!

SEWARD. What is it?

SYBIL. A housefly! Why don't you scientists get rid of them? You've had *centuries* to make some effort.

VAN HELSING. We get sidetracked by larger forms of life. (*Waves fly aside, munches canapes.*)

JONATHAN. (*Enters down Right stairs in tuxedo.*) I looked in on Mina. I think she's asleep.

SEWARD. Good. Come meet Professor Van Helsing. Heinrich, this is Jonathan Harker, Mina's fiance.

JONATHAN. How do you do? (JONATHAN'S *hand*

shoots out as usual but VAN HELSING, *with a canape in each of his own, can't grasp it. He crams both canapes into his mouth and shakes hands.*)

VAN HELSING. (*Muffled by crackers and cheese.*) Mina's-a-lucky-girl. Fine-specimen.

JONATHAN. (*Laughing.*) What did you say, sir?

VAN HELSING. (*Swallows, speaks clearly.*) I said Mina has good taste. You're a fine, healthy young animal.

JONATHAN. (*Embarrassed.*) Oh. Thank you. (*To* SYBIL.) I guess that ties in with your lamb theory.

SYBIL. (*Vaguely; she's forgotten it.*) What? Oh, yes.

DRACULA. Professor Van Helsing, just before we were introduced, you were about to give Dr. Seward your diagnosis of Miss Murray's ailment. May we hear it now?

VAN HELSING. No, you may not. I don't discuss such matters with laymen.

DRACULA. Layman? You call me that? (*Laughs.*) How very amusing. I have been called much worse. (*He goes to fireplace, coldly observing them all, his arms spread wide across the mantel and holding his cape, all but obliterating the fireplace itself.*)

VAN HELSING. I see I'm the only one not in formal dress. I'd better eat in the kitchen.

SEWARD. (*Smiles at him.*) No, we'll give you an oversized napkin, cover you head to foot.

JONATHAN. (*Opening cigarette case.*) Would anyone like a smoke?

SYBIL. Oh, I'd love it. I don't smoke well, but it makes me look so worldly. (*As* JONATHAN *lights it for her she coughs on the first puff.*)

JONATHAN. Anyone else? Professor?

VAN HELSING. No, I have my pipe— (*Feels in pockets without success.*) somewhere.

JONATHAN. (*Approaching him.*) Count Dracula?

DRACULA. (*Cuttingly.*) I have my own. (*They settle down.* VAN HELSING *gives up his pipe search, sits in*

swivel chair; SEWARD *sits at desk munching;* JONATHAN *and* SYBIL *are on sofa with their cigarettes. All have their backs to* DRACULA *as, from thin air, he magically produces a cigarette with its tip literally flaming.* VAN HELSING *arcs in swivel chair just in time to catch this peripherally. As* DRACULA *blows flame out, puts cigarette to his lips and begins smoking,* VAN HELSING *rises, crosses to him.*)

VAN HELSING. What an unusual cigarette. It smells of sulphur.

DRACULA. That must have been the match I used.

VAN HELSING. (*Evenly.*) I did not see you use a match. (*There is an unblinking stare between them. Then* DRACULA *goes swiftly to* SYBIL *and bows.*)

DRACULA. Miss Seward, you once said I must see the view of Castle Carfax from your roof. I should like you to show it to me. *Now.*

SYBIL. Why, I'd be delighted. We can have a cozy chat. This way, Count Dracula. (*She hurries up the Left stairs, trying for a youthful sprint and arrives at the landing short of breath. She fans herself, turns to* DRACULA *on the steps below.*) We'll go up in the elevator. (*A coquettish smile, her face half hidden by the fan.*) Of course, sometimes it gets stuck. (*She exits.*)

DRACULA. (*Grimly.*) Not tonight! (*He exits after her.*)

VAN HELSING. (*Waits a moment.*) Arthur, if you will forgive me, I do not like your guest, Count Dracula.

SEWARD. Nor do I.

JONATHAN. That makes three of us!

VAN HELSING. Good. If we ever form a club, he can't join. . . . Now, gentlemen, quickly, while we are in trio we must talk of grave matters. Arthur, I assume we take Mr. Harker into our confidence?

SEWARD. (*Nods.*) As Mina's fiance he has every right to know.

VAN HELSING. Agreed. Please sit down, and try to

believe what I tell you. Your belief can save her life. (*Mystified,* JONATHAN *sits on sofa.* SEWARD *brings swivel chair down for* VAN HELSING.)

SEWARD. For you, Heinrich.

VAN HELSING. No, no. *Please!* (*Impatiently pushes swivel chair away.*) What I will say will make you unhappy, makes me unhappy—and when I am unhappy I pace. It is my safety valve. (*Waits till* SEWARD *is seated in desk chair.*) First, since I entered this house tonight, my worst suspicion has been confirmed.

JONATHAN. You mean that Mina—?

VAN HELSING. Please, young man. Facts first, questions afterward. (*Turns to* SEWARD.) Before I left Amsterdam I studied Wilhelmina's case history so often I could recite it to you from memory! Then I compared it, item by item, to the medical reports and coroner's report of the late Miss Lucy Westenra.

SEWARD. Coroner's report? How did you get that?

VAN HELSING. I sent an urgent cablegram from Holland. An unusual death can bring about a hasty marriage between medicine and the law—misalliance though it is. *You* know that, Arthur! . . . The similarity of Miss Westenra's symptoms to Mina's made me curious. More than that, they frightened me.

JONATHAN. Why?

VAN HELSING. Because Lucy Westenra had two little wounds on her throat—exact duplicates of those I found on Mina's throat! (*As both men start to rise he holds out his hands to stay them.*) Gentlemen, we are fighting no new disease here, no rare infection. We are fighting an enemy so powerful, so horrible you will deny his existence, but I tell you—with my heart's truth I tell you—Wilhelmina Murray is the victim of that creature, half human, half ghoul, called the Vampire. (*Both men are instantly on their feet in protest.*)

SEWARD. Good God, Heinrich!

JONATHAN. (*Overlapping* SEWARD.) Professor, you don't expect us to—

VAN HELSING. (*Tops them.*) Arthur! Mr. Harker! Please be still! . . . If you close your minds you are closing Mina's tomb.

JONATHAN. But you ask us to believe that Vampires are *real?* You ask us now, in the Twentieth Century, to accept superstition of the Dark Ages as fact? You ask too much! (*He turns away angrily, gets cigarette from his case, lights and inhales it deeply and moves up to the windows.*)

SEWARD. Heinrich, I know you well. I'm sure you mean every word, but—as one scientific man to another—what proof do you have?

JONATHAN. (*Coming down to them.*) He has no proof! How could he? Has he seen a Vampire suck blood from the neck of his victim? His whole theory is childish.

VAN HELSING. (*Quietly.*) In other words, I am in my second childhood.

JONATHAN. Vampires! Where do they exist but in Gothic novels, in pulp magazines, in superstitious minds of the ignorant? No living man has ever seen one—except when one is impersonated in a bad American movie. . . . I can't believe my ears. Mina is in danger and we talk of mythical creatures come back from the dead! (*He strides to bar, pours himself a shot and drinks it neat.*)

VAN HELSING. (*A pause, then to* SEWARD.) Arthur, the Westenra medical report states that the girl was given five massive blood transfusions.

SEWARD. Yes, Heinrich.

VAN HELSING. Yet she died of weakness, exhaustion. Where did all that healthy blood go?

SEWARD. We do not know.

VAN HELSING. Ah! You do not know! . . . Was there an open lesion through which it seeped away? No. . . . Did she have hemorrhages? No. . . . Did she have tiny wounds on her neck through which that blood could have been drained by a Vampire? *Yes!*

(JONATHAN *turns at bar, puts down his glass and listens.*)

SEWARD. But medical science—

VAN HELSING. (*Sharply.*) Medical science cannot explain her death! Yet you and science deny even the possibility of my theory because— (*Faces* JONATHAN *at bar.*) as you said, Mr. Harker, it is childish.

JONATHAN. (*Approaches* VAN HELSING *in amazement.*) You really believe what you're telling us, don't you? To you everything you say is perfectly sane.

VAN HELSING. Thank God, yes. Every word is based on the intelligence of an open mind and infinite research. I know the history, the horror, the incredible powers of the Vampire as no one else. Since boyhood he has been my hobby. My library is crammed with books on the occult, on necromancy, witchcraft, black magic, werewolves, vampires— Books that would astound you. These creatures—

SEWARD. We don't need books, Heinrich. You astound us.

VAN HELSING. All right, all right! I admit I never really believed. I half-believed, so I enjoyed my hobby. But tonight, with living evidence upstairs— (*Glances up Right stairway.*) that the Vampire *does exist,* does attack human beings, with that living proof surpassed by the dead proof of Lucy Westenra's bloodless body, tonight my hobby will help us save Mina's life.

JONATHAN. Us?

VAN HELSING. (*Stopped short.*) You will not help me?

JONATHAN. (*Quietly.*) I do not believe you.

VAN HELSING. Arthur? (SEWARD *cannot answer. He shakes his head and moves away. A silence.* VAN HELSING *gets his luggage, mounts Right stairs to landing, then turns:*) I have the same old room, Arthur? (SEWARD *nods.*) I will beg Mina to tell me the truth. She lied because she is afraid to— (*Suddenly puts luggage down on landing. He begins by addressing them*

calmly, but he ends by excoriating them both.) Let me tell you some truths. (*Coming part way down steps.*) After I have gone upstairs, you will call them lies. You will say Van Helsing has gone insane.

SEWARD. My dear friend, don't—

VAN HELSING. Be seated and be *silent!* (*He waits. To humor him,* SEWARD *sits again in swivel chair,* JONATHAN *on tuffet below desk. When they are settled,* VAN HELSING *slowly comes down into the room.*) I want to shock your complacent, prejudiced minds! . . . Vampires have the powers of the Devil. They can transform themselves at will. A Vampire can come through those windows or down that chimney as a bat and, in the wink of an eye, assume human form. Or what appears to be human—for Vampires are the Undead, corpses still half alive who roam the earth at night with their insatiable thirst for human blood. (*Turns directly to* JONATHAN.) Will you have more?

JONATHAN. I will listen.

VAN HELSING. By day the Vampire must return to his coffin and lie helpless in daylight sleep, comatose till sunset. Only by day is he vulnerable. Then, if you drive a stake through his heart, you bring him ultimate death and he crumbles to dust as you watch. But he can be destroyed *only by day.* . . . At night nothing can harm him. Night is his kingdom! . . . He can become invisible, so that you will not even know when one is beside you. He can appear in a fog, or dissolve in a mist. How, then, can mankind fight him?

SEWARD. Heinrich, you are overwrought. You cannot mean—

VAN HELSING. Overwrought? I am enraged by you both! You will not let your eyes see nor your ears hear. (*Apparently defeated, he crosses to Right stairway. Then he faces them again. His voice is quieter at first, but it mounts with his conviction:*) One point more; then I will go to Wilhelmina. . . . The Vampire has fangs where we have the two canine teeth. These—

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