

## **The Mystery of Mr Renfield and Count DRACULA**

Adapted by Andrew Loudon

### **Story Outline**

Mr RENFIELD languishes in a cell. His world is a surreal cross between a Victorian lunatic asylum and a contemporary hospital. He is in the care of DR SEWARD, who is fascinated by his delusions. Renfield is tormented by dreams and waking visions of a character he calls "DRACULA". He is our unreliable narrator, as he weaves his strange tale to Dr Seward and anybody who will listen.

It seems Count Dracula has lured JONATHAN HARKER to his castle in Transylvania, where he effectively holds him prisoner. Dracula uses Jonathan to learn all about England, where he plans to expand his mysterious activities. Jonathan gradually learns more and more disturbing facts about his host – that he is hundreds of years old, has no reflection, does not eat and never appears in daylight hours. He observes Dracula climbing down an almost vertical wall of his castle, so Jonathan tries, but fails to escape the same way. He suspects Dracula can transform himself into a bat.

When alone, Jonathan explores the castle. He finds himself entranced by bats in the moonlight, and in a semi-sleeping state, strange "undead" women descend upon him. They have sharp canine teeth, identical to Dracula's, and they want to drink his blood. Jonathan is saved by Dracula, who promises the women they shall have Jonathan when the time comes.

In daylight, Jonathan explores further. He finds a ruined chapel, and discovers Dracula in a coffin in the graveyard, sleeping, as if dead. He grabs a shovel, to attack, but is paralysed by the sight of Dracula's eyes turning to stare at him. Later, Dracula leaves for England, followed by a band of Gypsies, carrying his cargo of fifty earth-filled coffins. Jonathan makes a desperate bid to escape and make his way home to his fiancée, MINA...

Mina tells her best friend, LUCY, of her worries about Jonathan. She has had no word from him. In return, Lucy shares her story - about how three men have proposed to her in just one day. As Lucy tells her story, she re-enacts it. Her first suitor is Dr Seward. Lucy rejects his proposal, but has a disturbing encounter with Renfield on her way out. Lucy also rejects her second suitor, QUINCEY. Finally, however, she is delighted to accept the hand in marriage of the aristocrat, ARTHUR HOLMWOOD.

While Lucy and Mina are on holiday together in Whitby, the whole town is upset by a weird incident, when a ship is blown in by a storm. It appears to have no crew - only a dead man, tied to the ship's wheel. Lucy has problems sleepwalking, and one night, Mina wakes to find Lucy is missing. She sees Lucy up on the cliffs, in her nightdress, a cloaked man standing over her. The figure of Dracula disappears as Mina arrives. Lucy has two red pin-pricks on her neck. They do not realise it yet, but Dracula has arrived in the ship, and Lucy is his first English victim.

Lucy's behaviour becomes odder and her health declines. Dr Seward is distracted by his still-burning love for Lucy, but notices a change in Renfield's behaviour, as he jubilantly declares, "The Master is at hand". Renfield escapes from the asylum, but is found next door, in the grounds of Carfax Abbey, where Dracula has secretly made his new home.

Mina hears news that Jonathan has escaped alive, though he has lost his memory of recent events and is mentally exhausted. She nurses him back to health and they marry. Jonathan gives her a journal that he has kept, which he cannot bear to read. He makes her promise not to read it, except in an emergency.

Lucy becomes very weak. She is losing a lot of blood at night time. Confused by her symptoms, Dr Seward calls for help from his old friend, VAN HELSING. Van Helsing decides that blood transfusions

are the only way to save her life. First her fiancée, Arthur, then Dr Seward, then Van Helsing give their blood. Dr Seward is bemused, as Van Helsing covers Lucy with garlic in an attempt to protect her, and he insists that all doors and windows stay shut at night. Van Helsing keeps a night vigil over Lucy, and notices that she is under constant night time attack from bats flapping at her window.

Van Helsing has to go to Amsterdam to get some important information. He sends a telegram to Dr Seward to look after Lucy. Seward, however, does not get the message in time, as he is attacked by Renfield, who cuts him and drinks his blood. Lucy is alarmed in the night by an escaped wolf jumping through her window. She loses her protective garlic and is then attacked by Dracula.

The next morning, Dr Seward, Van Helsing and Arthur arrive, but they are too late to save her. Van Helsing notices her teeth have become strangely sharper. Lucy pleads for a kiss from Arthur before she dies. Van Helsing drags him back. Later, Lucy pleads with Van Helsing to “guard him and give me peace.” Van Helsing now allows Arthur to kiss her forehead. Lucy dies... and yet, she is “undead”.

Meanwhile, Mina is out walking with Jonathan in London, when he is shocked to see Count Dracula in a crowd. Mina is struck by her husband’s strange reaction, and decides to read his journal of his time in Transylvania. At Lucy’s funeral, Mina notices Van Helsing covering the coffin with garlic. He is a little hysterical, but as they talk, Mina begins to wonder if there is a link between Lucy and Jonathan’s experiences. She agrees to give Jonathan’s journal to Van Helsing.

Lucy has become a Vampire, and begins attacking children on Hampstead Heath at night, biting their necks. Van Helsing and Dr Seward investigate her tomb in daytime, and discover that it is empty. They rescue a child from her clutches.

Van Helsing gathers everybody together to share his knowledge gained from folklore, academic research in Amsterdam and Jonathan’s journal. He explains that Count Dracula is a “Vampire”, who has come to London. He declares that Lucy has become a vampire, having been violated by Dracula’s blood-sucking attacks. He explains that vampires detest garlic, crucifixes and the host from Holy Communion. A vampire can only be destroyed by driving a stake through its heart, then cutting off its head and filling the mouth with garlic.

Van Helsing insists that Arthur joins him and Dr Seward on an expedition to Lucy’s grave, in daylight, to destroy her. Arthur accepts the terrible task of staking her heart, and then he is finally allowed to kiss her. Van Helsing proposes they should next find Dracula and destroy him.

The vampire-hunters decide to use Dr Seward’s residence as their base. Mina asks to see Renfield. He is changed man, extremely intelligent, and seems to know of Lucy’s death, almost as if he and Dracula have a psychic connection. Jonathan arrives back from a research mission to Whitby, with news that a cargo of fifty earth-filled coffins was delivered from the mysterious wrecked ship to Carfax Abbey – next door to Seward’s asylum. Seward realises they have missed clues from Renfield’s behaviour, and that Dracula’s hiding-place is on his very doorstep. The vampire-hunters vow to break into Carfax Abbey and sterilise Dracula’s fifty coffins with garlic and host, but decide that Mina should stay, and not take part in the raid. As the men leave, Renfield demands to be released and appears to be sane. He is refused, and he asks that they remember his request.

The men set about sterilising all the coffins in Carfax Abbey, though they realise that some of the fifty are missing. They are attacked by a plague of rats. The vampire-hunters return to the asylum, to find Mina being attacked by Dracula. They jump to Mina’s defence, but Dracula escapes. Mina has a thin open wound on her neck. Renfield tells them that he let Dracula into the building, then he dies of injuries he has sustained during the break-in.

Mina is now undead. Van Helsing explains that she will be damned as a vampire for eternity – unless they can destroy the vampire who bit her, before her transition is complete. The clock is ticking. She

has to survive until Dracula is destroyed. Van Helsing touches her forehead with the host – it burns her and forms a scar.

The vampire-hunters track down Dracula and his remaining collection of coffins to a house in Piccadilly. Only one coffin is missing, and its location remains a mystery. They sterilise all the coffins they have found, and wait to ambush Dracula. A fight ensues when he returns, and the men nearly succeed in destroying him, but Dracula escapes through a window.

Unsure how to now find the Vampire, Van Helsing hypnotises Mina, just as dawn is breaking, hoping that there is a psychic link. He succeeds – Mina reveals that Dracula is on board a ship, in his last remaining coffin. The vampire-hunters deduce that Dracula is heading home to his Transylvanian castle. Mina pities the vampire, and explains that she may herself need similar pity soon. The men vow to chase Dracula all the way across Europe, to save Mina from a dreadful fate.

Van Helsing uses Mina's connection to Dracula, by hypnotising her at dawn and dusk to obtain clues about his route. The vampire-hunters split up into three pursuing units: Seward and Jonathan travelling alone, whilst Van Helsing travels with Mina.

Night begins to fall, as Van Helsing and Mina approach Castle Dracula. They make a protected circle of host, and as the wolves howl, they are menaced by a terrifying vampire lady. Once day breaks, Van Helsing destroys Dracula's lair in his castle, and the vampire lady. In a final confrontation, Dracula is killed, though not quite in the manner that Van Helsing had specified must be used to kill a vampire....

Mina admires the look of peace on Dracula's face, before he crumbles to dust. The scar on her forehead instantly heals. Mina is released from the curse of vampirism.

Renfield wakes up in a modern hospital. A NURSE asks him if he is feeling better after his hypnotherapy session with Dr Seward.