

Van Helsing

ACT I

DRACULA

27

~~that vampires actually exist and—and that Mina
and Lucy have been attacked by one?~~

VAN HELSING. Your English doctors would all laugh at such a theory. Your police, your public would laugh. (*Impressively*) *The strength of the vampire is that people will not believe in him.*

SEWARD. (*Shaking head, looks away from VAN HELSING*) Is this the help you bring us?

VAN HELSING. (*Much moved*) Do not despise it.

HARKER. (*To SEWARD*) Doctor, this case has stumped all your specialists. (*To VAN HELSING*) Go on, Professor. (*SEWARD looks at VAN HELSING.*)

VAN HELSING. Vampires are rare. Nature abhors them, the forces of good combine to destroy them, but a few of these creatures have lived on for centuries.

HARKER. (*Excited*) What is a vampire?

VAN HELSING. A vampire, my friend, is a man or a woman who is dead and yet not dead. A thing that lives after its death by drinking the blood of the living. It must have blood or it dies. Its power lasts only from sunset to sunrise. During the hours of the day it must rest in the earth in which it was buried. But, during the night, it has the power to prey upon the living. (*To SEWARD. Incredulous move from SEWARD*) My friend, you are thinking you will have to put me amongst your patients?

SEWARD. Van Helsing, I don't know what to think but I confess I simply can't follow you.

HARKER. What makes you think that Lucy has been attacked by such a creature?

VAN HELSING. (*From now on dominating them. SEWARD looks at him*) Doctor Seward's written account of these ladies' symptoms at once aroused my suspicion. Anæmia? The blood of three men was forced into the veins of Miss Mina. Yet she died from loss of blood. Where did it go? Had your

specialist any answer? The vampire attacks the throat. He leaves two little wounds, white with red centres. (HARKER rises slowly.) Seward, you wrote me of those two marks on Miss Mina's throat. An accident with a safety-pin, you said. So I thought, I suspected, I did not know, but I came on the instant, and what do I find? These same wounds on Miss Lucy's throat. Another safety-pin, Doctor Seward?

SEWARD. Do you mean to say that you've built up all this nightmare out of a safety-pin? It's true I can't make out why she hid those marks from us.

VAN HELSING. I could tell you that.

SEWARD. (Pause) What! I don't believe it. Of course Lucy's trouble can't be *that*.

HARKER. (A few steps L.) I do believe it. This theory accounts for all the facts that nobody has been able to explain. We'll take her away where this thing can't get at her.

VAN HELSING. She will not want to go.

SEWARD. What!

VAN HELSING. If you force her, the shock may be fatal.

HARKER. But why won't she go if we tell her that her life depends on it?

VAN HELSING. Because the victim of the vampire becomes his creature, linked to him in life and after death.

SEWARD. (Horried, incredulous, shocked; rises; crosses L. to below end of desk) Professor, this is too much!

HARKER. Lucy become an unclean thing, a demon? (SEWARD stops on the word "demon"; turns R.)

VAN HELSING. (To HARKER; rises) Yes, Harker. Now will you help me?

HARKER. Yes, anything. Tell me what to do.

VAN HELSING. It is dangerous work. Our lives are at stake, but so is Miss Lucy's life, so is her soul.

We must stamp out this monster. (*Turns L. to SEWARD.*)

HARKER. How can we stamp it out now?

VAN HELSING. This undead thing lies helpless by day in the earth or tomb in which it was buried.

SEWARD. A corpse, in a coffin? (*A step R.*)

VAN HELSING. A corpse, if you like, but a living corpse, sustained by the blood of the living. If we can find its earth home, a stake driven through the heart destroys the vampire. But this is our task. In such a case the police, all the powers of society, are as helpless as the doctors. What bars or chains can hold a creature who can turn into a wolf or a bat?

HARKER. A wolf! Doctor Seward, those dogs howling! I told you they howl that way in Russia when wolves are about. And a bat—Renfield said there was a bat.

SEWARD. (*Another step in to L.C.*) Well. What of it?

VAN HELSING. (*Reflectively*) Your friend Renfield does not like the smell of wolf's-bane.

SEWARD. But what in the world has your wolf's-bane to do with all this?

VAN HELSING. A vampire cannot stand the smell of wolf's-bane.

HARKER. You suspect that lunatic?

VAN HELSING. I suspect no one and everyone. (*Crosses to SEWARD*) Tell me, who is this Count Dracula?

SEWARD. (*Crosses up a few steps*) Dracula? We really know very little about him.

HARKER. When I was in Transylvania I heard of Castle Dracula. A famous Voivode Dracula who fought the Turks lived there centuries ago.

VAN HELSING. I will make inquiries by telegraph. No, but after all this thing must be English. (*Crosses L.*) Or at least have died here. His lair must be