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DRACULA: THE DEATH OF NOSFERATU

by
Christopher P. Nichols

**Adapted from the novel, *Dracula*
by
Bram Stoker**



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(DRACULA: THE DEATH OF NOSFERATU)

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DRACULA: THE DEATH OF NOSFERATU

**A One-Act Play
For 4 to 6 Men and 1 to 3 Women**

CHARACTERS

DR. ARTHUR SEWARD a physician
SNELLING* a hospital warden
PROF. ABRAHAM VAN HELSING a scholar
JONATHAN HARKER a young man of the bar
MINA MURRAY a young woman
R. M. RENFIELD* a patient at the asylum
COUNT DRACULA the beast

***May be played by a man or a woman.**

PERIOD: Edwardian, turn of the century, 1895-1905.

PLACE: Whitby, England.
Dr. Seward's Asylum for the Insane.

DRACULA:

THE DEATH OF NOSFERATU

AT RISE: *DR. SEWARD is seated at the desk. A howling of dogs is heard.*

SEWARD. Blast! (*Goes to open double doors. Listens to howling.*)

(*SNELLING enters left.*)

SNELLING. Professor Van Helsing is here, sir.

SEWARD. Thank God.

(*VAN HELSING enters.*)

SEWARD. Professor, I hardly hoped you would come so quickly. (*They embrace.*)

VAN HELSING. Arthur. An old student, a dear friend? Naturally I came at once.

SEWARD (*catching SNELLING before he leaves*). One moment, Snelling. Bring us some port—or perhaps brandy, Professor?

VAN HELSING. Nothing for me.

SEWARD. Oh, well, I think I shall have something. The port, Snelling.

SNELLING. Yes, Doctor. (*SNELLING exits.*)

VAN HELSING. I hope you have not become a drinking man, Arthur. (*VAN HELSING sits on day bed—upstage end.*)

SEWARD. No, Professor. That would be too simple a response to the situation here. (*SEWARD moves to stand behind desk.*)

VAN HELSING. I was very stirred by your letter, Arthur.

SEWARD. Perhaps, if I had summoned you sooner.

VAN HELSING. You are most competent. I am sure you are doing everything possible. But this strange malady suffered by this young lady?

SEWARD. Yes, Mina Murray.

VAN HELSING. It immediately aroused my curiosity and, of course, urgency. How did she come to be your patient?

SEWARD. She is engaged to my dear friend Jonathan Harker who has suffered an attack of brainfever while on business on the continent. He chose my sanitarium as a suitable site for his convalescence. Harker has been recovering quickly. Mina joined him here to prepare for the approaching wedding. Then...well, it all happened so quickly. One morning we found Mina unconscious ...she revived but she has begun to weaken daily.

(SNELLING enters with wine. He exits. SEWARD pours glass of wine as VAN HELSING watches, silent.)

VAN HELSING. We have important work to do, Arthur. I should like more details on Miss Murray.

SEWARD (*crossing left to door*). Snelling can bring her file.

VAN HELSING. Later. I would like to hear it from you... from the beginning.

SEWARD (*crossing to UC*). Very well. She appears to be wasting away. Every morning she seems to be in worse condition.

VAN HELSING. Have you performed transfusions?

SEWARD. Yes, that's the oddest thing. Two transfusions have been given. I gave blood as did Jonathan Harker.

VAN HELSING. So much blood! From two strong men... and the effect?

SEWARD. Her color returns, and she breathes more easily, only to be found nearly comatose from the lack of blood the next morning.

VAN HELSING. A loss of blood!?

SEWARD. Yes, massive loss of blood! It makes no sense. No sense at all. It's hematologically inexplicable, I tell you.

VAN HELSING. How has she been bearing up to her illness?

SEWARD. Mina is a highly spirited girl, sometimes almost frivolous. She has shown admirable strength. But by day she is passive, resigned. Strangely, towards evening she often becomes rather animated...and yet, she dreads sleep.

VAN HELSING. Why?

SEWARD. She has nightmares.

VAN HELSING. What is the content of her dreams?

SEWARD. She won't talk about it.

VAN HELSING. She doesn't remember them?

SEWARD. No, I don't think it's that...she won't remember them.

VAN HELSING. Hmmmm...Are there any other symptoms?

SEWARD. Yes, two tiny marks on her throat. I've never seen anything like it.

VAN HELSING (*obviously alarmed, he rises and crosses up around to stage right side of day bed*). Describe them please...

SEWARD (*crosses from DL to center stage toward VAN HELSING*). Two white dots with red centers, they appear to be infected. (*Shows the spot.*) She is curiously reticent about these marks; she won't allow me close enough to examine them properly.

VAN HELSING. How did she acquire the wounds? (*Turning toward SEWARD.*)

SEWARD. She insists that she stuck a pin into her skin while trying to do up her scarf. (*VAN HELSING shakes his head, crosses right to fireplace.*) I'm baffled, Van Helsing. Nowhere in my literature can I find any similar disease. That's why I called for you. I hoped your experience with Oriental and Slavic disease might be of some help.

VAN HELSING. Perhaps, we shall see. (*Demonic, wild laughter is heard offstage. VAN HELSING is physically startled.*) Gott In Himmell! What's that?

SEWARD (*wryly*). Don't worry, it's merely Renfield, my zoophagous patient, a most interesting case of psychiatric disorder.

VAN HELSING (*crossing DR*). Let's see... "Zoophagous" ... (*Mouths the word.*) ... Do you mean life-eating?

SEWARD. Yes, the chap thinks he can prolong his life by ingesting a variety of lesser life-forms.

VAN HELSING. Curious delusion.

(*HARKER rushes in.*)

HARKER. Dr. Seward!

SEWARD. Jonathan! Van Helsing...this is Jonathan Harker, the gentleman I was telling you about.

HARKER. Very nice to meet you. Excuse me, Doctor. Did you give Mina permission to walk about the grounds?

SEWARD. Good Lord, no! She should be in bed...she doesn't have the strength...Why?

HARKER (*crossing upstage and out onto the balcony*). Snelling said he saw her leave the building. Look, there she is. Mina!

SEWARD. Bring her in quickly. She mustn't be out. (*HARKER exits. SEWARD goes upstage and out onto the balcony looking upstage and downward as if from a height.*) Mina! What on earth are you doing? (*Comes in.*) Jonathan will fetch her.

VAN HELSING. Is this typical of the girl?

SEWARD. Not at all. She's lain in bed all day, exhausted.

VAN HELSING. Tell me more about this Renfield.

SEWARD. The orderlies can't seem to keep him locked up. But he's harmless, he does no more than roam the halls for hours then returns to his hospital cell.

(HARKER and MINA enter and cross to center.)

SEWARD. Mina, I hope you're not becoming a difficult patient.

MINA. I'm sorry, Dr. Seward, but I woke from my nap feeling so much better...I wanted to walk. (*MINA is fully dressed in Gibson girl fashion with hair up and a scarf around her neck; she is animated but pale with dark circles under her eyes.*)

SEWARD. Yes, I think you look better. (*Slightly amazed at her seeming strength.*) Mina, this is Professor Van Helsing. Mina Murray.

MINA (*crossing to VAN HELSING*). How do you do, Professor. I apologize for feeling better just when you've come to cure me.

VAN HELSING. Nothing could please me more than to find that my trip is purely a pleasant visit.

HARKER. I apologize for being so abrupt earlier, Professor.

VAN HELSING. Quite understandable. Let's stop apologizing to one another and get on with an examination of Miss Murray.

HARKER. I'd like to be present, if I may, during the procedure.

VAN HELSING. Certainly. Might I look at Miss Murray here? I find these surroundings more congenial than a dreary, antiseptic examination room.

SEWARD. Of course. You may use the day bed. (*VAN HELSING crosses to stage right side of day bed. MINA lies down with her feet downstage. VAN HELSING examines her, paying special attention to her gums. HARKER is at DR end of day bed and SEWARD sits at desk.*)

VAN HELSING. Tell me, Mina, when did you first feel this weakness?

MINA. Three weeks ago. I could barely get out of bed. Of course I'd been concerned about Jonathan's health... and excited about the wedding preparations. I suppose I couldn't sleep properly.

VAN HELSING. I understand. What did you do?

MINA. Nothing for a day or so. But I began to feel worse.

HARKER. I noticed something was wrong.

MINA. I hated to bother anyone, but finally I asked Dr. Seward for a sleeping draught.

VAN HELSING. Which he gave you?

MINA. Yes, Laudanum, I think.

SEWARD. No, Chloral ($C_2HCL_3OH_2O$). The modern morpheus!

MINA. In any case, I drank it all off.

VAN HELSING. Did it work?

MINA (*pause*). I suppose...It's only that I dreaded sleeping so.

VAN HELSING. Why is that?

MINA. I don't know. It's all so strange.

VAN HELSING. How do you feel now?

MINA (*hesitant*). Better.

VAN HELSING. As well as when you woke up from your nap?

MINA (*nervous*). No. What time is it? Is it very late?

HARKER. Perhaps I should take her to her room.

VAN HELSING. One moment. Is there anything else?

MINA. No.

VAN HELSING. Nothing? No headaches, no dizziness?

MINA. No.

HARKER. What about the nightmares you had?

MINA. Jonathan!...Oh...I never remember them.

VAN HELSING. You have them often?

MINA (*pause*). Yes, every night.

VAN HELSING. But you remember nothing afterwards?

(*MINA shakes her head. Pause.*)

VAN HELSING. Mina, I'd like your permission to try a little experiment.

MINA. What sort of experiment, Professor?

VAN HELSING. I'd like to hypnotize you.

HARKER. Hypnotize her? Why?

VAN HELSING. It's harmless, Mr. Harker. Mina will be perfectly safe. But, I think we might elicit some useful discoveries about those dreams.

SEWARD. Professor Van Helsing is an extremely competent doctor, Jon.

MINA. I trust him, Jonathan. If it will help...

VAN HELSING. I hope it will. Arthur, may I have my bag? (*SEWARD gets the large physician's bag that VAN HELSING brought in with him. It is next to the left entrance.*)

HARKER. I've never liked this sort of thing.

VAN HELSING (*taking small prism attached to a gold chain out of his bag, he begins to swing it back and forth in front of MINA*). If you just follow this with your eyes, Mina. And clear your mind. Relax...Listen to my voice...and relax...Can you hear me?

MINA. Yes.

VAN HELSING. Fine. I'd like very much for you to remember the first night of weakness. You are in your room...asleep. Do you remember that time?

MINA. Yes.

VAN HELSING. You said you had some rather unpleasant dreams.

MINA (*pause*). No.

VAN HELSING (*to the OTHERS*). The patient frequently resists at first. (*To MINA.*) Do you not remember the dreams?

MINA. There were no dreams.

VAN HELSING. And yet you told your fiance that you had a nightmare.

MINA. It was not a dream...it happened.

VAN HELSING (*pause*). What happened, Mina?

MINA (*becoming visibly upset, beginning to writhe in an almost sensual manner*). There's the sound. Wind, but something on the wind...wings...sometimes a mist...

cool, stifling...He's at the window. He wants to come in. (*MINA writhes as fighting with herself.*)

VAN HELSING. Who?

MINA. A bat...huge...black...I'm frightened, but I know I want him to come in.

SEWARD. Why call a bat him? (*VAN HELSING hushes SEWARD.*)

MINA. The mist is there, filling the room. It's pleasant at first, until the eyes. See his eyes and his teeth...(*She is struggling with herself.*)

HARKER (*crossing UR beside VAN HELSING*). Bring her out of it!

VAN HELSING. One moment. Who is it, Miss Murray?

MINA. Horrible, but I let him...I can't say no! (*Her hand wanders to her throat.*) Stop, please, not again! Please, please, God...no! (*VAN HELSING reaches for scarf.*)

HARKER. Wake her up. I insist!

MINA (*crying and clutching her throat*). No!...No! (*VAN HELSING pulls her scarf off. She screams, pulling away, flailing her arms...then is quiet.*)

VAN HELSING. Mina, can you hear me? When I give the command, I want you to awaken, but you will remember nothing of this. Do you understand?

MINA. Yes.

VAN HELSING. Very well, then. (*He snaps his fingers.*) Wake up Mina. (*MINA comes to—dazed.*)

MINA. Is that all?...What? (*Clutches her throat.*) My scarf?

VAN HELSING (*handing her the scarf*). Mina, why wouldn't you let Dr. Seward examine those marks on your throat?

MINA. I hated to cause a disturbance.

SEWARD (*crossing DL in front of desk*). Young lady, your health, and not my peace of mind is the only concern of anyone in this room. (*MINA sits up facing downstage, appears very exhausted. HARKER comes around to comfort her.*)

MINA (*holding on to HARKER*). Dr. Seward, (*She looks at VAN HELSING.*) may I go to my room now?

VAN HELSING. I think that will suffice as a preliminary examination. My advice for the moment is to get lots of rest.

HARKER. I'll help you, my sweet. (*HARKER helps MINA to her feet and towards the door.*)

MINA (*stops and straightens up turning to HARKER*). I'll be fine, Jon. (*HARKER is taken aback at her sudden regaining of strength then kisses her on the cheek and opens the door for her.*)

HARKER. Mina, call for me when you wake up. (*MINA exits. HARKER turns to SEWARD and VAN HELSING in confusion. He crosses straight DL off stage side of desk.*) Professor Van Helsing, I'm eager to know what you have to say about Mina.

VAN HELSING. At present it's too soon to diagnose with certainty. I believe we must all watch Miss Murray closely and pay attention to the slightest pathological deviations—developments that may occur. We must observe all symptoms, however minute. (*SEWARD and HARKER nod in agreement but want more. VAN HELSING crosses DR in thought, stops, shakes his head as if to keep himself from asking something. He turns to SEWARD and HARKER.*) Arthur, Jonathan...has Miss Murray been exposed to anyone...especially a foreigner...of any sort?

SEWARD. No...*(Looking at HARKER.)* Well...Yes. There's Count Dracula...*(VAN HELSING is suddenly shocked.)* who has moved into Carfax Hall.

VAN HELSING. Did you say Dracula!? *Count Dracula!?*

SEWARD *(surprised at VAN HELSING's reaction)*. Yes ...His estate borders on my hospital grounds. He has taken to coming early every evening to visit. He has become quite friendly with Mina and seems very concerned about Mina's illness. She, strangely enough, appears to gain strength when he's here.

HARKER. Yes, too concerned, in my opinion. *(Suddenly wild laughter is heard, footsteps running down hallway towards Dr. Seward's office.)*

RENFIELD *(offstage at left entrance...screaming)*. Dr. Seward! Dr. Seward, I must speak with you!

(RENFIELD beats on the door, then bursts into room onstage. VAN HELSING steps backwards to fireplace, HARKER backs towards left wall... BOTH as if a dangerous madman has come into their midst... which is possibly true. RENFIELD crosses to center stage looking at them.)

SEWARD *(fearlessly crosses to RENFIELD)*. Renfield, what are you up to?

RENFIELD *(enigmatically)*. The master cannot be confined!

SEWARD. I don't know how you do it, man. Let me call for Snelling...He can escort you back to your room.

RENFIELD *(rushing up to SEWARD. Falls on hands and knees begging)*. Please, Doctor, please, I must have a few words with you. Please, now! It's urgent!

SEWARD. Very well, then. Be brief...What is it?