

The Road to Castle Dracula

My name is Jonathan Harker. I am a lawyer and I live in London. About seven years ago, some strange and terrible things happened to me. Many of my dear friends were in danger too. At last we have decided to tell the story of that terrible time.

Part of my work is to find houses in England for rich people who live in foreign countries. At the beginning of 1875, I received a letter from Transylvania, a country in Eastern Europe. The letter was from a rich man called Count Dracula. He wanted to buy a house near London.

The Count asked me to find him an old house with a large garden. The price of the house was not important. I found him a large, old house to the east of London. I wrote to the Count and he agreed to buy it. There were many papers which he had to sign¹. To my surprise, Count Dracula invited me to visit him in his castle in Transylvania. 'Bring the papers with you,' he wrote in his letter. 'I can sign them here.'

I was very busy and did not want to go. Transylvania was far away and few English people had been there. There was another reason too. I was going to get married in the autumn to my darling Mina. I did not want to leave England until we were married.

But Mina said that I should go.

'The Count is a rich man,' she said. 'You may be able to do more business with him. You can travel most of the way by train. In two weeks, you will be home again.'

So I accepted Count Dracula's invitation. I left England at the end of April. Mina gave me a book about Transylvania to read on the train.

On the morning of 4th May, I reached Bistritz, a small town in Transylvania. It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining on

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the great Carpathian Mountains. Somewhere, high up in those mountains, was Castle Dracula where the Count lived. The coach² from Bistritz would take me to the Borgo Pass. There, the Count's carriage would meet me. The coach left from the inn³ in Bistritz at three o'clock.



I had six hours to wait. I decided to have a meal. Nobody in the inn spoke English, but the innkeeper spoke some German. He welcomed me and I was soon eating a good meal.

The inn was very crowded. I watched all the people in their brightly-coloured clothes. They were speaking in languages I could not understand. I drank some more wine and called to the innkeeper.

‘What can you tell me about Count Dracula?’ I asked him. ‘Have you ever seen his castle?’

The innkeeper walked away without answering my questions. All the people in the inn stopped talking. They looked at me in fear and surprise. Then they all began to talk at the same time. I heard the name ‘Dracula’ and another word, repeated several times.

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I looked at my dictionary. They were saying the word ‘vampire’⁴. Where had I read the word before? I opened the book that Mina had given me.

There are many old stories about the vampires of Transylvania, I read. Vampires are men and women who never die. Vampires have long, sharp teeth. They bite the throats of living people. Then they drink their blood. Everyone in Transylvania fears vampires. People often wear a cross⁵ to keep themselves safe . . .

I shut the book quickly. Did people believe these stories?

It was time for me to leave. I paid for my meal. Then I walked outside and got into the coach. There was a crowd of people outside the inn. Suddenly the innkeeper ran forward and spoke to me through the coach window.

‘Must you go to Castle Dracula?’ he said. ‘Do not go to that terrible place!’

‘I have important business with the Count,’ I answered.



‘Then take this,’ the innkeeper said, ‘and may God help you!’ And he put a gold cross on a chain into my hand.

As the coach began to move, strange thoughts went through my mind. Who was this man I was going to meet? Did Count Dracula have strange powers? I could not believe it.

The coach began to move more quickly. The sun shone on the trees and the water of little rivers. There was snow on the tops of the highest mountains. What a beautiful country Transylvania was!

The mountains were closer to us now, and the road went higher and higher. Shadows grew longer as the sun began to go down behind the mountains. Then suddenly, the light had gone. The mountains and sky were dark. The coach went faster and faster. I could hear a terrible sound. It was the howling of wolves⁶.

The moon was shining now. I could see dark shapes near the road. The coach went higher and higher. And now I could see a narrow road to the right. The coach stopped. We were at the Borgo Pass.

Down the narrow road came a small carriage, pulled by four black horses. As the carriage stopped, its driver shouted, ‘I have come from Castle Dracula! Where is the Englishman?’

‘Here!’ I replied. The driver jumped down from the carriage. He took my bag and held me by the arm. In a moment, I was sitting beside him and the black horses were galloping up the narrow road.

The driver wore a black cloak⁷ and his hat was pulled down over his face. The mountains were high black walls on both sides of us. We were going so fast that I had to hold onto the carriage with both hands. Black clouds covered the moon. The carriage had no lights and I could see nothing. Wolves howled all around us. The driver laughed. As the horses went faster, I closed my eyes in fear.



Down the narrow road came a small carriage, pulled by four black horses.

Then suddenly, the journey was over. The driver pulled me down from the carriage. He threw my bag beside me. In a moment, the carriage and the driver had disappeared. I had arrived at Castle Dracula!