

Chapter I: Downright Queer

The Whitby Beacon

August 10th

A Public Nuisance's End Applauded

Yesterday morning, an incident ghastly in its inception but gratifying in its conclusion occurred near where Church Lane meets Church Street when Mr. Peter McNeill's half- and ill-bred mastiff was mauled to death, not by another ferocious dog, but by a tame wolf! According to Coast Guard Chief Officer Henry Lightoller, who unexpectedly found himself at the centre of the singular event, the infamously unruly canine, which had yet again strayed from the coal merchant's property close to Tate Hill Pier, rushed him and his companions, the recently shipwrecked Count Dracula of Transylvania and his solicitor Mr. Jonathan Harker of Exeter, upon their having descended the lane-adjacent Church Stairs. The trio, in the midst of making plans for the funeral rites for the wrecked ship's heroic captain and first mate, were taken by surprise by the monstrous mongrel charging them, its behaviour reportedly even more fierce than usual. With the East Cliff at their backs, the debris from its freshly gouged face blocking the road to their right, and the massive animal advancing from their left fore, the men had nowhere to retreat and no defensible position. But for the idiosyncratic Eastern European aristocrat's pet wolf, all would have been lost!

Indeed, eyewitnesses among the men exhuming corpses from the landslip's slough saw the Transylvanian wolf spring into action, in turn charging the English mastiff. While everyone about looked on in consternation and fear, the two formidable beasts—the dog, for no apparent reason, incensed; the wolf quietly intent—hurtled towards each other in great bounds, leapt at precisely the same instant, their maws agape, and collided with a bone-rattling thud and frenzied gnashing of bared teeth. The Count's defender, the calmer, more calculating combatant, quickly seized the advantage, clamping its deadly jaws with their prominent fangs on its adversary's throat, cutting off the thrashing brute's air and spraying the cool sea breeze with geysers of its hot blood. As the mastiff's muscular body slowly went limp, the straddling wolf, going in for the kill, renewed its efforts and ripped open the dying animal's throat to gasping onlookers' shock and horror. Then, to the amazement of all but Count Dracula and Mr. Harker, the savage beast transformed back into a domesticated companion that padded back to its master, pausing only to shake, rather than lick, the dripping gore from its muzzle—a victor's last insult to the vanquished.

Members of what had become a small crowd by this point related watching silently as the foreign nobleman and his native-born associate knelt, in concern, to assess the now uncannily docile wolf for injuries—that is, until a solitary pair of clapping hands gave rise to a second and then a third before all in attendance expressed their appreciation in applause before a stupefied Mr. McNeill, who was the last to arrive at the scene!

Lucy Westenra's Diary

August 10th; The Crescent, Whitby

Today, the most sorrowful of sorrowful days, Whitby, seafaring town that it is, paused, amid its grief for its own, to honour en masse the memory of the two heroes of its tragedy: the stalwart captain and loyal first mate of the *Demeter*, who fell and died together beneath a fallen spar after

having fulfilled their duty by delivering their passengers safely to port. And so, this overcast early morning, a black tide of wind-rippled mourning dress slowly welled up the East Cliff's Church Stairs, buoying two lily-draped caskets. At the procession's head, having adamantly refused to shirk his obligation, the dourly downcast Count Dracula shouldered the position of lead pallbearer, proving himself amongst the strongest in withstanding the ascent's full 199 steps. Also having worked wonders since his arrival—beginning but minutes after making landfall with his first conversation with Chief Officer Lightoller—and having spent a veritable fortune on funeral preparations, the imposing yet reticent man now not only led the long, winding cortege, but appeared to pull it single-handedly behind him, up the stone stairs' curving slope. But while the Count proved unfailingly stoic, his ever-present companion, the departed's lead mourner, and my dear friend, Jon, struggled to contain his anguish as he followed behind the mate's casket, his upraised right hand's splayed fingers tenderly touching its foot the entire time. That is, until the caskets, after having been borne aloft for so long, at last breached the plateau's churchyard and St. Mary's sonorous bells began to toll, when this most bereaved of all finally broke down, letting loose a single gasp before sobbing quietly. Washing over everyone in his wake, Jon's weeping flooded constrained hearts and rose up constricted throats, laying bare Whitby's despair in a chorus of grief sung not only in memoriam of the eternally inseparable pair but all the dead freshly entombed atop the cliff and still being exhumed below.

Fortunately—or not—as emotionally wrought as people were upon entering St. Mary's, starched Reverend Mr. Smythe's soulless service had, by its blessed end, restored their stereotypical taciturnity as evident by their empty expressions upon exiting. By comparison, Jon's wounded look and the Count's clouded countenance telegraphed their states of mind for anyone to see. That is, anyone but the notoriously aloof ecclesiastic, who most definitely did not, as he stood before the pair of open graves and, reading from *The Book of Common Prayer*, droned on about the deliverance of the dead from damnation through faith in Christ our Lord. So, after the vicar's rote recitation of "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" and the sexton's callous lobbing of spadefuls of dirt upon the lids of the lowered caskets, when a slumping Jon, appearing as though he might faint away and fall atop the first mate's, had to be held upright by a now glowering Count, the nobleman at long last also let loose.

"Enough of your journeyman's ways!" he snapped, startling everyone within earshot. "Let the final word be that these two men were dedicated as much to each other as they were their duty; and let the two men who knew them last in life finish attending to them in death!"

Finally expressing some depth of feeling, if only his own grievance, Reverend Mr. Smythe, peering overtop his spectacles, looked askance, as if at an adversary standing across the abyss of death from him, and finished, "...in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Thus, having had the last Word, so to speak, he closed his Prayer Book, turned about like a tin soldier of Christ, and processed alone back to his squat stone church.

And before likewise trudging off to his workman's shed, the cantankerous caretaker, in a rare show of sympathy for his rejected master, stabbed the blade of his spade into the dirt piled high beside him and replied, "Then, yer Lordship, let thy will be done with earth rather than by heaven—and by yerself to boot!"

To the murmuring of the multitude gathered around the graves, the Count, without a moment's hesitation, overlooked Mina to hand Jon over to me; took up the sexton's spade; then, with grand

sweeps of his strong arms, began sprinkling dirt athwart both caskets in long, gentle sprays—as if performing a baptism to initiate the newborn dead—and, by giving of himself in full measure, moved heaven more so than whatever words Reverend Mr. Smythe had left unsaid. Nevertheless, while Jon and I watched, crying quietly, and the hitherto uncharacteristically subdued, if not curiously cowed, Countess—completely covered in black silk and lace—slowly and softly clapped her gloved hands in approval, the disapproving—of whom Mina regrettably proved one—turned and, murmuring amongst themselves, began to disperse—but not without casting backward glances of reproach.

Wilhelmina Murray's Diary

August 10th; The Crescent, Whitby

With each passing day, my conviction creeps closer towards certainty that Mr. Swales did, indeed, speak the truth; for, in fact, little good came of the *Demeter's* arrival, and what did—the miraculous albeit scandalous return of my betrothed—pales in comparison to all the anxiety-inducing enigmas I now face because of it.

First, the Jonathan I received neither appears nor behaves like the proper English gentleman to whom I had bade a heartfelt farewell—and upon whom I had even bestowed a chaste parting kiss—only a little over three months ago. His unshorn hair and scraggly beard (so unbecoming!), scarred face (so unsightly!), right hand's ringed fourth finger (so indecorous!), and emotional outbursts (so mortifying!)—which were all on full public display at this morning's funeral for the *Demeter's* dead—bespeak a change in him—a change most decidedly for the worse—that he has yet to explain to me and I have been unable to inquire about in private.

Second, if Jonathan has confided what happened to and has come over him to anyone else, it would have been Lucy; but my darling girl now gives me the go-by, having gone all giddy over the much-whispered-of Countess Dolingen, whose very presence raises questions and whose every action elicits comments. After all, what else can come of her capricious comportment—especially today, when shrouded in black silk adorned with blacker jet, she, no relation to the deceased, made a spectacle of their mourning by hiding her face behind a thick veil of layered lace? And then there was the appalling incident of her applauding at their interments, which leads me, lastly, to—

Count Dracula, the Countess's less eccentric but no less mysterious companion and, more importantly to me, the all-too-apparent object of Jonathan's attention, if not fascination—or worse? In less than three days, the enigmatic nobleman has proven himself the sun about which the pair—and now everyone else—orbit, the vortex around which events rush, a force of naked will and flaunted wealth that bends merchants and ministers alike to do its bidding: in other words, a monstrous man by modesty's measure.

But to finish where I began: with Mr. Swales. I had only just stepped away from the unseemly scene playing out graveside at the end of today's funeral when the old man hobbled over as quickly as his bowed legs could carry him. The expression on his weather-worn face troubled, he stopped me short and, leaning in while looking past me, warned, “Mark my words, Miss Murray: The wreck and ruin of the doomed *Demeter* with its drowned crew, strange cargo, and missing logbook won't end in this churchyard—or even in this town. Those foreigners aren't just un-English—they're unnatural—downright queer! Look how our dear Miss Lucy has so hastily attached herself to that beguiling countess and your Mr. Harker always escorts his accommodating count. If you've never taken heed of anything I've ever said, take heed now and take that clueless pair in hand and away from here and lose yourselves where you can't be found!”

My senses heightened by my alarm at hearing another speak aloud my worst fears, I also heard the short cessation in the rhythmic shovelling behind me coincident with the widening of Mr. Swales's deep-set eyes and the blanching of his ruddy face. Outraged by what I inferred an alien's act of intimidation against one of England's own, I spun about to confront Count Dracula but found him intently occupied as before; and when I turned back to attend to the terrified Mr. Swales, I found him scurrying away as best he could.

August 11th; The Crescent, Whitby

I just heard that Mr. Swales's granddaughter found him dead in his bed early this morning. As reported by the dearly departed's fellow gossipmongers, his visage, far from serene with a Christian's blessed assurance of everlasting life through God's grace, appeared positively frightful, indelibly fixed in everlasting horror! This happening on the heels of yesterday's events, what can I help but think?

Chapter II: Moved in All but Sight

Jonathan Harker's Diary

August 11th; The Crescent, Whitby

Yesterday, those who were what I hope to be were laid to rest. Today, in remembrance of them, I can only strive to live as they did. But as much as I awoke late this morning longing for a new life with my beloved, I also awoke dreading my old life with my betrothed. Unfortunately, the tenuous new as yet exists only within the walls of one small, shared bedroom, while the entrenched old, with all its expectations and obligations, extends the entire way from Whitby to Exeter. Small wonder, then, that I thrilled to read the note left behind by Vladislaus, its scrawled script as bold as his plan for us to spend time alone together at last—first, for a single night in London and then for several weeks in Purfleet, where we would make a proper home of the empty Abbey. So, when I emerged alone eager to take the first steps towards realising our new life together, I could not hide my chagrin at being accosted by Wilhelmina, who had lain in wait for me in her and Lucy's room across the hall. Choking on her doubtless long list of questions, she only managed to utter, "Jonathan..."

"Wilhelmina..." I responded in kind, unkind in not sparing her having to take our conversation's lead.

"We have not spoken privately since your return four days ago."

"As you well know, I was, at first, unwell, and then there remained the unloading of the *Demeter's* cargo to oversee and its officers' funeral to arrange."

"Yes, but now you look much restored, the wreck has been emptied, and its dead have had their due."

Her first statement a lie and her last a dismissal, I almost took umbrage, but then the thought of my past lies and her future dismissal restrained me.

"And you've fulfilled your responsibilities to both your employer and your client," Wilhelmina continued before concluding, "so let us now return home to Exeter where things can, at long last, return to normal."

Only briefly holding up the note I still held in my hand lest she catch a glimpse of its contents, I replied not untruthfully, "The Count requires that I attend to him."

Her eyes and voice gone flinty, Wilhelmina countered, "After all this time, I, your affianced, would think you would want to attend to me first."

Unwilling to sully my life to come by lying now, I told her again truthfully, "Not serving Count Dracula would be a disservice to Mr. Hawkins, who may only be 'my employer' to you but who, to me, is akin to a father."

"Really?" Wilhelmina could not help but ejaculate. "Do you still cling to his claim that you will inherit from him? Can't you see he has only ever used you—and, since we first met, me as well—to his advantage and for his profit? Why, he is, in all but name, *Martin Chuzzlewit's* Seth Pecksniff!"

Unable to prevent my eyes from narrowing and lips from pursing as I looked down on Wilhelmina in all her unpleasantness, I said, "I must go." Then brushing past her and making off fleet-footed down the staircase steps, I, in equal measure resolute in and relieved by the certainty she could not bring herself to call me back, left her behind with her bitterness.

Lucy Westenra's Diary

August 11th; The Crescent, Whitby

While on an afternoon stroll with the Countess, I, in a fit of despair, confided that I felt smothered by the oppressive pall of death cast by yesterday's funeral, last night's passing of poor Mr. Swales, and the constant conjecture about Charlie's missing mother having been buried alive. To my companion's suggestion that we bypass the charnel house of St. Mary's for the desolation of nearby Whitby Abbey, I was more than amenable, relieved as I was at the prospect of finding some measure of respite in its solitude. And so, following the example of her veiled visage, I fixed my gaze dead ahead, turning a blind eye to the bleak churchyard on our left with its freshly dug graves in favour of the medieval edifice's crumbling façade. In this way, we walked arm in arm atop the grassy headland under an overcast sky of ashen clouds driven by North Sea winds carrying the warning clangs of wave-tossed buoy bells and the keening cries of careening gulls.

The antithesis of the neighbouring Anglican church, the remnants of the Gothic relic—now a hollowed-out shell—still awed with what little remained of their lofty stone arches. Yet the unavoidably apt comparison of the Abbey's windowless walls to empty-eyed skulls looking out unaware over water and land alike could not help but haunt the back of my mind and give me pause. But then, the Countess, who had yesterday likewise paused before setting foot inside St. Mary's, reached out her gloved hand to me now as I had mine to her then, and, in answer to my admitted misgivings, reassured me, "Do not fear, my dear. Death has no dominion here. Unable to outlast these ruins, it quit them long ago. Unlike at that Passionless heresy of a church next door with its crucifix-less altar, you will find only life anew in this deathless sanctuary. So, do not falter, my brave, lovely girl—no, my brave, lovely *young woman*—so lovely as to attract three suitors at the same time and so brave as to entertain them all in their desperation. Come with me then, your newfound friend from afar, who has no reason not to wish you the best the world has to offer, and let me share with you what you, in your own hour of desperation, need and only I, being of like mind and body, can give."

My relief even greater at once again being offered refuge from encompassing death—and life—I laid to rest my unfounded fears, took hold of the Countess's proffered hand, and stepped forward.

Professor Van Helsing's Journal

August 11th; Seward's Asylum, Purfleet

The student takes his teacher to task for not keeping abreast of “the latest technological advancements applicable to modern medical practice”! Phonograph recordings? Bah! “Silly toys for foolish boys,” I reprimanded my dearest impudent upstart. Besides, what doctor worth his salt would so record his diagnoses and treatments for any quack to eavesdrop upon and dispute? A pen, paper, and a locked drawer for me, thank you very much! But what should I expect from a member of the new breed of physicians who, because they read *The Lancet* and the *Journal of Mental Science*, think themselves more knowledgeable than their more experienced elders? Next, my well-intentioned but misguided pupil will be performing blood transfusions, a most unnatural act with dire consequences for both a patient's body and soul—worst of all, death and damnation!

Wilhelmina Murray's Diary

August 11th; The Crescent, Whitby

No sooner had Jonathan closed the front door than I, resolute in my anger and justified by my misgivings, opened his bedroom door, keeping my conscience at bay by rationalising I could always pray later—if necessary—to be forgiven my trespass.

The room being small, my eyes unsurprisingly first fixed upon the bed, its headboard centred against the wall to my right; and though I had expected to find it there, its scant narrowness struck me with a sudden shock as my mind's eye envisioned Jonathan sharing it with the physically imposing foreigner. And then, even worse, my memory resurrected the sight of the Count holding my unconscious fiancé in his arms and gazing upon him in his natural state before glaring back at me in my public humiliation and private shame. At the recollection, I shuddered no less than at the time.

After shaking my head to clear my mind, I, acting with a thief's apprehensive intent yet reckless abandon, hurriedly set about searching for Jonathan's travel diary, certain the gift I had given him just before he had boarded the train to begin his journey contained the secrets I dreaded but needed to know. That I found the leather-bound journal neither atop nor in the Davenport, and neither in his briefcase nor his luggage, but, at the very last, under a bed pillow had me frantic when the door unexpectedly swung open to reveal my worst fear realised: Count Dracula!

“Miss Murray,” he simply said at the sight of me, his glinting gaze taking in my flustered face and the purloined diary I held open before me.

Lucy Westenra's Diary

August 11th; The Crescent, Whitby

The Countess led me into the Abbey's ruins through the doorless arch of their main entrance in the mostly missing western wall. A few paces inside, once out of sight of Whitby, and unable to see St. Mary's, I paradoxically felt sheltered and safe despite the entire roof, all the windows, and the full length of the Nave's southern side being open to the elements. So too must the Countess have felt, since she, to my surprise, lifted her veil to reveal her face. As always struck by the beauty of her pallid skin, blue-green eyes, and rose-red lips—especially now, framed as they were by the black of her hat, hair, and high-necked collar—I could not help but gaze once more upon her regal countenance. In response, she smiled indulgently.

Blushing and looking away, I said, “Please forgive me for staring.”

Deftly slipping off her right-hand kid glove, the Countess reached out, took hold of my chin between her cool forefinger and thumb, and gently turned my face back towards hers. "Rest assured, my dear, I would—always—assuming you ever gave me cause," she replied graciously.

My embarrassment allayed, I looked up into her aquamarine eyes and, finding myself mesmerised, felt drawn into their abyssal depths.

Wilhelmina Murray's Diary

August 11th; The Crescent, Whitby

The Count's formidable presence blocking the small bedroom's only exit, I found myself fully exposed, with nowhere to hide or run, unable to escape his accusing eyes and my irrefutable guilt.

Harkening back to our first encounter, he said, "Unlike in Homer's *Odyssey*, this bed can be moved—in fact, it has been moved in all but sight—so there is no marital test to be made here. But that does not give you reason to remove the diary secreted in it."

Then lapsing into grim silence, the Count, to my alarm, entered the room, causing me to shrink back slowly into the corner farthest from the door; but before I was forced to make a scene, the intimidating man stopped before Jonathan's briefcase, opened it, and rummaged inside. After having found what he had been searching for, he held out his hand towards me and said, "It is better for all concerned if you take this instead."

As I cautiously reached out to take from the Count the folding photograph case that I had also gifted Jonathan, he likewise reached out to take from me the leather-bound journal.

The exchange made, he stepped back to the side of the door and, closing his eyes, turned his stony face away from me and towards the exit, gesturing me out.

Chapter III: A House of Secrets

Excerpt from a Draft of Professor Van Helsing's Address to the Dutch Chapter of the International Society of Christian Mental Pathologists Dated August 12th

Like Jehovah's Ransom, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we too bring good news to a fallen world that comes of wilful natures brought low by weak minds given over to sin. And of the countless sins that have beset Mankind since its expulsion from Eden, none have proved more societally corrupting than the malignant mental malady of sexual inversion—a perversion of the natural order so virulent and pernicious that quarantining the terminally degenerate in prison is necessary to protect the uninfected and contain the latent infected. Just think of all the recently tried, convicted, and incarcerated unnaturalists, whose names—thanks to public records and opinion: the state and the street, if you will—are now synonymous with "gross indecency," and you will realise the threat this epidemic—no, this pandemic!—poses and both our moral duty and professional obligation to prevent it.

Count Dracula's Journal

August 12th; The Crescent, Whitby

Having occasionally echoed the choruses proclaiming me a monster, I am well within my rights to similarly assess the English as, at best, hardly human and, at worst, altogether inhuman. From what I have experienced since first setting foot in Perfidious Albion, the natives' virtue, with few exceptions, runs cold, reckoning others' vices much like their counting houses' clacking machines calculate balances. However, these Anglo auditors of the soul all ironically revel in the vice of

avarice, every transaction between them invariably reduced to exacting sums of their precious pounds, shillings, and pence. For here, men's eyes naturally glance at breast pockets instead of trouser-fronts, where their fellows' true treasures are kept. I, however, being a foreigner, know where Jon's treasure lies; and, in availing myself of it, am thankful its darker hue testifies to his being not entirely English. Otherwise, how could I love him so?

Jonathan Harker's Diary

August 12th; The Crescent, Whitby

Sitting in the Westenras' dining room with Vladislaus to my left, at the foot of the table, and the Countess across from me, I could not help but notice how the three of us—all garbed in black—were arrayed, like pieces on a chessboard, opposite Wilhelmina to my right, Lucy across from her, and our hostess Mrs. Westenra at the head—all dressed in cream or ivory. With young Charlie upstairs keeping an eye on infant Jacob and Berserker at Mrs. Westenra's side, everyone in our makeshift household was accounted for. The wolf's head resting comfortably and comfortingly on the ailing matriarch's lap, I thought he, like the rest of us, must sense she is dying. But propriety prevented this and all the other sundry topics in mind from being addressed openly and honestly, making ours a house of secrets—secrets, at best or worst, shared between no more than two of us at other times and in other places.

Even yet, all our secrets were on full display in the unspoken telltales we could not help but reveal to one another in directing them at each other:

- Lucy's apprehensive attentiveness towards her mother, innocent infatuation with Ilse, disappointment over disapproving Wilhelmina, and conspiratorial glances at me;
- Wilhelmina's doleful reproach of Lucy, resentful glares at Ilse, sullen refusal to acknowledge Vladislaus, and unvoiced vexation with me;
- Ilse's covetous satisfaction in Lucy, disdainful dismissal of Wilhelmina, and level gaze at Vladislaus;
- Vladislaus's level gaze at Ilse, blind eye towards Wilhelmina, and locking of eyes with mine;
- and, finally, my own sympathetic solicitude for Lucy, warning looks at Ilse, resolved reserve towards Wilhelmina, and shameless regard for Vladislaus.

So, our concerns and confidences not entirely concealed, our desires not entirely repressed, and our strifes not entirely stifled, we discussed the only suitable subject left us: Charlie's fate now that his missing mother has finally been counted among the casualties of the cliffside landslide and his miscreant father, after having been released from gaol, has gone to ground.

Excerpt from a Draft of Professor Van Helsing's Address to the Dutch Chapter of the International Society of Christian Mental Pathologists Dated August 12th

If you think me overstating the societal consequences of sexual degeneracy, I can prove otherwise by citing the case, only recently brought to my attention, of an unabashed, debauched deviant of the worst order.

These are the particulars: The inveterate invert in question is a fifty-nine-year-old Englishman, who, reportedly once of good repute and not insubstantial means, could, until only a few months ago, have been mistaken for one of our august members. However, to his relations' mortification and peers' incredulity, he, one day, for no apparent reason, simply began to doff all vestiges of respectability—and then even decency—by taking up the life of the most dissolute kind of libertine: a profligate pervert. So unbelievably flagrant and unapologetically shameless did he become that

initially the police and subsequently the courts were compelled to intervene to safeguard public morals from the social contagion of his disordered, if not diseased, mind. In the end, the wretch—his own worst witness—publicly proved himself beyond a doubt irredeemably obdurate. Hence, the Crown secured a conviction on multiple counts of the grossest indecency, whereupon the judge, mercifully forgoing a prison sentence, committed him to a lunatic asylum, where I, having been consulted, found him no less—if not even more—incurable after learning he had been discovered preying upon his male attendants!

Wilhelmina Murray's Diary

August 13th; The Crescent, Whitby

At first, Jonathan was sequestered by his count. Then, Lucy began hiding herself away with her countess. And now, only minutes ago, my dearest darling girl, whom I had watched over so anxiously only a week ago lest she sleepwalk in her fretfulness, slipped out of our small bed fully awake. Believing me fast asleep, she stole down the hallway to her "newfound friend," just as she had once come to me, already her longtime companion at the time, only a few years ago. And so, hearkening back, I sit here with no one save Mr. Swales's ghost for company, the dead man's last words to me resounding in my ears amid the disquieting silence of midnight.

Dr. Seward's Diary

August 13th; Seward's Asylum, Purfleet

Perversely enough, while the troubled minds confined with me sound to be resting in peace for once, my mind, far from being at peace, affords me no rest—unless.... But before I resort to the recourse of distressed doctors—or, put more candidly, indulge in it, as most of my ilk are rumoured to do—let me lay out plainly on paper what troubles me in the hope that doing so will unburden my brain and help me sleep.

Firstly, Professor Van Helsing: Owing my mentor so much, I fear making an ingrate of myself by resenting his increasing interest and interference in Renfield's case. Evidently, the polymath means to make a personal project of my patient, having mentioned in passing an address he has in mind to make to a medical society of which he is a member. Although this sounded all well and good at first, I fear a conflict is arising between my personal obligation to the Professor, upon whom I called only to consult, and my professional responsibility to my charge, as well as to the court that entrusted me with his care; which brings me next to:

Mr. Renfield: To my discomfiture, I must reluctantly admit that my antithesis in matters of irrepressible desire has made inroads with me over the course of our convivial war of wills and words—not that he could, of course, ever convince me to condone his illegitimate unnatural affections! However, his earnest appeals to indulge one's "fevered passion" have, despite my best defenses, lodged in my brain much like I imagine Cupid's arrow lodges in the love-stricken's heart; which brings me lastly to:

Miss Westenra: Despite having no one to blame but myself for my botched proposal, which undoubtedly proved me the least deserving of her suitors, I still felt disappointed upon learning of Lucy's engagement to Arthur Holmwood, the future Lord Godalming. Then, finding myself of late influenced by Renfield's arguments, I have had to admit to myself that I harbour the unrealistic yet inextinguishable hope that the fair lady might still be mine should fate ever intervene on my behalf. After all, am I not justified in thinking her being affianced is her not being espoused?

So, now, my clandestine confession complete, will I finally be able to drift off amid midnight's disquieting silence, or shall I awaken my asylum's inmates to lull me to sleep with their screams—or, better yet, invoke Morpheus to help me dream of my dearest Lucy's undying love?

Jonathan Harker's Diary

August 13th; The Crescent, Whitby

Late last night, I awoke to find my beloved, usually sprawled over the bed and me, withdrawn, tense, and muttering—ensnared in the deepest of sleep, entrapped in a nightmare abiding therein. My momentary confusion and perpetual curiosity at first curbing my loving concern, I regretfully did not immediately awaken him. However, shortly thereafter, when I felt him shudder violently and heard him give forth a strangled cry, I shook him partially to his senses and, wrapping an arm around him and pulling his cool body close, warmed him with my heat and lulled him back to a peaceful rest.

Lucy Westenra's Diary

August 13th; The Crescent, Whitby

In my youth, not yet married, and against my nature, I find myself a mother not by birth pangs or by baptismal sponsorship, but on account of a father's dereliction and a town's indifference. Were the child involved not poor Charlie, sensitive, mistreated soul that he is, I would feel aggrieved for myself. But as it is, I cannot help but feel aggrieved for him—and even more so given the sudden turn in Mina's sympathies.

Whereas my longtime friend, as is her wont, had initially declared her resolve to protect the abused boy if only to defy his "contemptible drunken lout of an unfortunate sire," she, having become unsympathetic as of late, now harps on about protecting my reputation, saying, for fear of such rumours as mongers might peddle, I should deliver up the all-but-orphan in favour of delivering a legitimate son and a Godalming scion.

Fortunately, in the face of Mina's flagging resolve, I have the Countess's staunch support upon which to rely—as well as her audacious example with Iacob to emulate. For truly, to walk beside her, un-English and unwedded, and to mark her utter disregard for starers and whisperers alike as she passes by attired entirely in black while cradling an infant swaddled in white, is to witness what I never thought I should: a woman defiant!

North Eastern Railway

Goods Department

Consignment Note

Station: Whitby (Town)

Date: August 13

The North Eastern Railway Company are requested to receive and forward, as per address and particulars on this note, the undermentioned goods, to be carried at the owner's risk, subject to the conditions on the reverse hereof.

Consignee: Count Dracula c/o Goods Manager

Address: King's Cross Station, London (to be called for by Messrs. Carter, Paterson & Co. for transit to Carfax, Purfleet)

Number of Articles: 50

Dracula/Harker: A Gay Gothic Romance Inspired by Bram Stoker's Dracula
Part II: From Whitby to Purfleet
By Mark Zidzik

Description of Goods and Marks: Large wooden cases containing common earth for agricultural use. Marks: VCD

Weight (Tons / Cwt. / Qrs. / lbs.): 10 / 0 / 0 / 0

Charges and Totals:

Rate per Ton: 12s. 6d.

Amount for Carriage: £6 5s. 0d.

Cartage/Loading Fee: 10s. 0d.

Total: £6 15s. 0d.

Status: Carriage Paid

Received by: A. Sheffield, Goods Clerk

Signature of Sender or Agent: Jonathan Harker

Wilhelmina Murray's Diary

August 13th; The Crescent, Whitby

No sooner had Mr. Swales's scandalously horrified corpse been expeditiously buried sight unseen than Lucy and I were back at St. Mary's—this time, with Charlie in tow—for the interment of his mother, whose scandal (whoring herself for her husband's sake) had at least allowed others, in his absence, to identify the fallen woman's broken body and spare the boy—and, consequently, us—having to view it. Likewise, the deceased's unrepentant sinful state spared us righteous Reverend Mr. Smythe's rote recitation of her funeral rite. However, had it somehow not, Count Dracula's earlier transgression against the clergyman certainly would have, seeing as how the aristocrat's evidently irresistible wealth had afforded the irredeemable Mrs. Colson a plot in a remote corner of the churchyard's consecrated ground. In this way, invisible powers were at play among us—but none more powerful than the Countess Dolingen.

With only the kindly parish clerk offering a brief prayer over the open grave, the entire affair was over almost before it began—which was fortunate, given any display of grief on our part would have been almost sinfully affected. And with the clerk respectfully taking his leave without delay, Lucy sent the boy off to enjoy the brightly coloured butterflies flitting among the greyed sandstone tombstones so that she and I might finally undertake, in private, the conversation—no, the confrontation—we had long delayed. But before I could begin, Lucy uncharacteristically took the lead.

“Mina, *do* spare me having to listen to you enumerate yet again your concerns on my behalf. I am resolved on the matter and past being swayed. When I return to London, Charlie will accompany me to be examined by the best specialists Harley Street has to offer. If no cure can be found, he—and I—will both learn the manual alphabet and proceed accordingly.”

“Then, my dear Lucy, please *do* think for yourself. How can he learn finger-spelling at his age when he has gone so long unlettered?”

Glancing at the boy, Lucy fumed under her breath, “Unlettered he may be; but he is certainly neither deaf nor dumb!” Then positively glaring at me, she continued, “And he is unlettered only because he was never allowed to learn. But that—and all the other neglect he has suffered—ends with me here and now.”

Unconvinced and undeterred, I argued, “What does your poor put-upon mother think of your plan?”

“Mamma thinks it the Christian thing to do.”

Unable to stop myself from sighing, I explained, "In her state, the good woman would; but 'the Christian thing to do' in her state is not the proper course of action in your situation."

Lucy narrowed her limpid eyes in reproval. "Pray, forgive me. I didn't realise following Jesus's example could ever be considered improper."

"And what of Arthur?" I pressed on. "With his imminent rise at his father's decline, what will he think of the prospect of taking up his family's seat in the House of Lords with his standing sullied by the scandal of a wilful wife having taken in an unworthy mother's broken child?"

Lucy's gloved hands clenched at her skirted sides. "As if either could be anything else with a worthless husband and father like theirs!"

"In this world where all men ultimately prove themselves worthless, better a child-burdened woman with a husband than without—like one shameless woman I am unfortunately all too well acquainted with!"

"Undoubtedly the same adoptive mother who warned me you are no better than all the other slandering self-righteous arbiters of propriety!"

"Yes! The selfsame shameless woman who, ever since you first met her—*only a week ago*—has never stopped filling your head with fanciful notions antithetical to your best interests and who has also never stopped dripping poison in your ear to turn you against me, your lifelong and closest friend!"

For a fleeting moment, Lucy beseeched, rather than berated, me. "Would such a friend insist I seal my fate and live a hateful life?"

In hindsight, I, in my zeal, proved regrettably blind to her appeal. "To have even more privilege as a peeress makes for 'a hateful life'; and all only for the price of becoming a wife and mother: womankind's common lot?"

On the verge of tears, Lucy, in her anguish, stated emphatically that which she had heretofore, and then but on rare occasion, only dared intimate. "Yes! Hateful to me as only a life can be in which I must bear with a husband and bear his children!"

Her words so desperate and the sight of her so pitiful, my jealousy gave way to frankness. "Then whyever did you entertain suitors and become engaged?"

If, as is said, the eyes are the windows to the soul, Lucy's soul lay bare before me. "Because I knew of nothing better then. But now I do—thanks to her."

"The Countess...."

"Yes," she affirmed, breaking down and beginning to weep.

Taking pity upon the dear misguided girl, I at last relented and held my tongue. Then gathering her into my arms, I swore to myself to save her from the meddlesome foreigner—and, if necessary, herself. That I felt us being spied upon from some hidden vantage as I did—presumably by the Countess herself lurking somewhere along the farthest reaches of the sprawling graveyard—further stiffened my resolve.

Jonathan Harker's Diary

August 14th; en route to London via the North Eastern Railway

Upon awakening on my last morning at the Westenras', I found the small guest room I shared with Vladislaus as dawn-greyed as on the first. However, unlike a week ago, the lifting of my eyelids, instead of leading my heart to soar, sent it sinking under an onrush of apprehension at the thought of the steps to be taken over the next few hours to extricate ourselves from Whitby—and, most worryingly for me, from Wilhelmina. For as much as I regretted leaving Mrs. Westenra

behind without her comforter Berserker and fretted over leaving Lucy behind with her captivating Countess, I more so begrudged my betrothed what I feared—or, rather, what I knew—she would have me say and do to be alone at last with my beloved. Thus, I lay sleepless and stock-still beneath his splayed, embracing arm and endeavoured to inure myself to what was to come with the prospect that I thereafter would break off my engagement most privately and properly in Exeter and finally be free of others' expectations to love whom I would.

Our loins girded by a last kiss behind closed doors, we, as planned, emerged ever grateful for the Westenras' hospitality and profusely apologetic over having to take our leave so soon yet politely insistent we had no choice but to follow the Count's crates already making their way to York, then London, and ultimately Purfleet. While the long-suffering matriarch was, as always, heartbreakingly gracious and her doting daughter, despite being privy to my lesser and greater plans, played her part of ingénue well, Wilhelmina, from her mien, all but telegraphed her mute disapprobation and vexation. In this way, we advanced from the breakfast-room to the entrance hall and, eventually, the train platform, where the Count and the Countess—and, likewise, Wilhelmina and I—finally out of time and excuses, bowed to the inexorable and, pairing off, exchanged our last words out of earshot of everyone else.

And so my intended's entreaty began: "Jonathan, never having explained yourself—neither what happened to you nor what has come over you since we last bid each other farewell over three months ago—you now leave me no choice but to implore you not to leave a second time or, if you must, that you take me with you, for I fear what failing to do either will mean for us both."

Her case pleaded well enough for court, I found myself hard-pressed to counter it. "The place inopportune and the time insufficient, I can only say not accompanying the Count and being accompanied by you are not options open to me—and as for everything else you would doubtless discuss, I can only say all will be addressed in Exeter upon my return. Until then, I ask that you be patient, which should not prove onerous if you continue what you came here for: to keep our dear friend Lucy company and watch over her."

Wilhelmina lowered her voice lest her ire be overheard. "I have been the epitome of patience throughout this protracted ordeal!"

Upon hearing the piercing whistle of the approaching engine, I looked past her, urging it onward with my eyes, while muttering under my breath, "Evidently not enough the epitome of patience to await me at home as one would expect of a fiancée engaged in planning her nuptials."

Not one to be overlooked, Wilhelmina stepped to the side and craned her neck to interpose herself. "No doubt, solicitor that you are, you expect me, a laywoman, to argue our reunion would have been further delayed had I remained in Exeter. But the more rational rejoinder I wish to make is that our reunion took place most improbably here, in Whitby, of all places, where you undoubtedly did not know I would be, owing to your evidently never having received my later letters—and, for that matter, my never having received yours."

Her insinuation—and the logic underpinning it—causing me to rivet my eyes on hers, I replied, "I told you the Count said the post can be most unreliable in Europe's hinterlands!"

Wilhelmina's eyes bored back into mine. "I'd say 'most unreliable' only where the Count is concerned!"

Upon hearing her cast aspersions upon his character, I leveled my own against hers. "After you attempted to pilfer and read my diary, you dare accuse him of doing the same with our correspondence?"

Wilhelmina's indignation dispelling at my revealing her hypocrisy, she faltered before me. "So, he told you then."

"How could he not?"

Unable to apologize, Wilhelmina instead regathered herself and reproached me. "I gave you a journal in which to record your travels so that you might share them with me, not a diary in which to unburden yourself of secrets you would keep from me!"

To this, I could say nothing.

"Tell me, at long last, who is this foreigner...this interloper...this *man* to you?" she finally demanded, her voice becoming so strident that she would have made a spectacle of us but for the din of the train's well-timed arrival with its screeching brakes, clattering couplings, and hissing steam.

But before I could decide whether to answer softly enough as to go unheard and evade the inevitable for now or loudly enough to be heard and bring everything to the fore—and to an end—then and there, I felt a hand press up against the flat of my back. Finding Vladislaus beside me, I watched him, the man whom I had come to desire above all others, dismiss with a curt nod the woman who was now all but my former fiancée. Then, not taking my eyes off him, I let him lead me away to our awaiting coach.

Lucy Westenra's Diary

August 15th; The Crescent, Whitby

Though Wilhelmina appeared poised in public after our farewells at the train station, she was anything but poised in private with me, alternately distraught and indignant as she took turns bewailing her fiancé and railing against his count. Having long suspected that my longtime companion never truly bestirred an unwitting Jon's heart and having only yesterday become privy, via the enlightened man himself, as to who now does, I dutifully stayed by her side in our small bedroom and did my best to console her in her inconsolable state—all the while endeavouring not to betray my confidant. However, wounded Wilhelmina eventually, if not inevitably, turned on me too, bewailing my "faithlessness" and railing against my "beguiling" countess. Thus assailed at evening's end after having had my patience tried and my nerves frayed for hours, I could not help but burst into tears upon finding myself targeted by my once-dearest one at her most dreadful, and run off to the selfsame "wicked woman" she decried in search of my own consolation. And in Ilse's arms, I found what I sorely needed as a flurry of her cool, soothing kisses rained down upon my forehead, then my cheeks, and at last my lips, tempering my fevered state, staunching my profuse tears, and quieting my gasping breaths and blurted words.

"How I do wish Jon and the Count were still here to keep Wilhelmina in check," I murmured distractedly as Ilse's kisses trailed down onto my neck, giving rise within me to a far different fevered state.

Her words offered up between gentle presses of her soft lips, Ilse murmured in return, "Rest assured, both bade me safeguard you. But being timorous men afraid of their own passion, they have no idea what that means for a brave young woman like you. Am I not right...*my love*?"

My uplifted face flushed, eyes closed, and mind reeling, I could only answer, "Yes."

That was the moment I heard Ilse's titter of delight flutter in my ears and felt my own delight at her unexpectedly taking a playful nip at my neck.

Chapter IV: Something of the Wilds

Count Dracula's Journal

August 15th; The Savoy Hotel, London

After over eight hours of train travel via the North Eastern Railway from Whitby to York and then by the Great Northern Railway from York to London, Jon and I, by yesterday's early evening, finally set foot in the mechanical heart of modern empire: London's King's Cross station. Our terminal, one of two adjoining, each a cavernous vault constructed of a cathedral's length of wrought-iron arches supporting an awesome array of overhead windows, resounded with the cacophony arising from idling steam engines, chatting passengers, shouting porters, and trundling barrows. Swept along its arrival platform by the crowd and its handlers, we soon found ourselves ensconced in a hansom cab en route to the Savoy with a luggage cart trailing behind. The smile on Jon's face at his being back in his element a sight I could not deny myself, I gazed upon him in all his obliviousness from my dusky corner and, for the first time since we departed Whitby, dismissed my misgivings over leaving Ilse unattended. At last alone with the man whom I had long sought to love, I resolved that, for once, I would allow no one and nothing to distract me from him lest I lose him to the life whence fate and I had drawn him.

Likewise, the head clerk overseeing the Savoy's reception office did not allow the startling sight of a foreign guest's great grey wolf inside the hotel's Front Hall to distract him from his duties. However, over the course of discharging them, while inquiring of his fellow Englishman and my handsome solicitor about an accompanying valet, the imperturbable Mr. Stevens did, if but for an instant, pause when I, interposing myself to test the limits of his composure and tact, told him I had left all my serfs at home. Managing to commiserate with me over my presumed inconvenience with a look that masked his presumed moral outrage, the head clerk went on to impart most apologetically that "...pets" were not permitted in the establishment's dining rooms. With a glance at Berserker, I informed Mr. Stevens that my "...pet" might forgive that omission if a platter of raw steaks and a bowl of water were delivered to our suite and a photograph was taken of him as the first of his kind, no doubt, to make use of the Savoy's famed "ascending rooms."

As per my plan, Jon and I soon found ourselves seated side by side on the plush upholstered bench inside the close confines of the hotel's famed "Red Lift" with Berserker sitting at our feet. Seemingly frozen in time, our party remained posed while the hotel photographer strove to frame us within the narrow cabin's red-lacquered, mahogany-panelled walls without his reflection appearing in the gilded mirror behind us. That he never noticed my reflection was absent altogether brought a bemused smirk to my lips, which our onlookers most likely mistook for aristocratic airs. The eventual flash blinding our eyes, its blast deafening our ears, and its smoke irritating our noses, we were glad of the opportunity to ascend—albeit slowly—above the crowd that had congregated in the lift lobby, several members of which could be overheard muttering about a foreign interloper, his shabby rogue, and their wild animal sully the Savoy's rarified precincts. Carried away by a wave of impetuosity arising from their hateful grievance, I leaned in close to Jon, who was leaning over to comfort Berserker, and wondered what further affront, if not downright uproar, would result should I do something as chaste as smell his hair or as loving as kiss the back of his neck. Instead, recalling the Bard of Avon's verse about valour and discretion, I again took up my position beside my beloved and looked out blankly over those who thought themselves our betters.

Conversely, the mechanism's operator—a short, slim, dark-haired youth of Mediterranean ancestry, whom we could not fail to notice, as resplendent as he appeared in his hotel livery—managed to ignore us in accordance with etiquette, despite any apprehension he may have felt on

our account. Though we only ascended to the second floor above the main lobby—which still took several minutes—I, by our adventure's end, felt indebted to him for disregarding us as much as he evidently did everyone else. Tossing him a full sovereign in acknowledgement of his discretion after he had folded back the inner brass and outer iron gates, I alighted with a smile at the sound of his gasp.

"You just gave that lift-boy the tip of a lifetime," Jon whispered, linking my proffered arm with his as we began strolling down the empty corridor, following the suite numbers towards our rooms.

"Why not?" I asked. "After all, we three look more alike in English eyes than not, and shall find appreciation nowhere save in one another, no matter what obeisance we offer up to the self-righteous masses' citadel of virtue."

Realising at last the full measure of what he had divulged aboard the *Demeter*, Jon brought us to a halt before our suite's double doors and, turning to me, asked, "Then, by not living a lie and being true to myself, I am considered by my countrymen as less than English?"

"If you were still England's own, you would not be mine now," I answered softly, leaning in to console him with a kiss.

His eyes widening, Jon squirmed round in my grasp to unlock the door. "The truth will come out, but certainly not here and now," he cautioned me under his breath. "I spared us a nosy page boy for this very reason, but burly porters are on their way up. And then there's Berserker's dinner."

"God forbid that we scandalise porters and a floor waiter, who have doubtless seen more in their employment here than you have in your lifetime," I whispered in his ear, pressing up against him.

Flustered and fumbling with the key, Jon shrugged me off and muttered bitterly, "What if the mere sight of us carrying on like any other indiscreet couple outrages some adulterous merchant prince or, heaven forbid, offends a sanctimonious grande dame?"

"Then Berserker can dine 'on the house' tonight—though he might find the Savoy's offerings too rich for his taste," I said, leaning in again, threatening to kiss his neck.

Momentarily stiffening, Jon, ever the solicitor, chided, "Sometimes you give me cause for concern, Vladislaus."

"Just wait until I get you alone," I murmured, on the verge of scandalising no one just as he unlocked the door, pushed open both leaves, and bolted inside with me and Berserker close on his heels.

Just as Jon had managed the head clerk and page boy downstairs, he dealt with the porters and floor waiter upstairs. Thanks to his aptitude for handling people as well as his mastery of modern technologies, such as our suite's electric call-bell and acoustic speaking tubes, all our needs were addressed in short order. Left with nothing to do, I whiled away the time in the principal bedroom, awaiting my beloved, whom I had intended to leave alone long enough to enjoy a novel "shower-bath" in our luxurious private bathroom. However, overcome by temptation and inclined towards mischief, I could not resist slipping in to pilfer the hotel's towels and his dressing gown while he was concealed behind the canopy bath's curtain and oblivious under its cascading water. Having thus no recourse, Jon eventually emerged dripping to my delight—and, fortunately for me, not wholly dismayed at being on full display.

Unremarkable though Jon might appear to most men when clothed, unclad, he proved striking. Indeed, the sight of his bare flesh enthralled me no less than the bite of my envenomed kisses does

him, reducing me to a mere appetite—and a ravenous one at that. Hungrily, I took him in, both in his entirety and in every detail: his fevered flesh and tender air, his fair skin and dark hair, his scarred face and ringed finger. Then, noticing the slight, silvery crucifix still hanging from his bearded neck, I knew him for the undeserved gift he is; and recalling its glint in the moonlight on that first night in the forest, I relived knowing him as something of the wilds.

In an instant, I was upon him.

Excerpt from a Draft of Professor Van Helsing's Address to the Dutch Chapter of the International Society of Christian Mental Pathologists Dated August 12th

Having addressed the depth of the degeneracy and breadth of the contagion of sexual inversion, I now come to the most important topic for us moral men of medicine: treatment. Fortunately for you, my colleagues in Christ, as the Lord, in His grace, has afforded me the opportunity to consult on the case of one among the worst afflicted, I now stand before you ready to share my latest findings on the subject. But before I do, because the eradication of pestilence forces us to look upon and deal with it directly, we must first gird our loins—a most unfortunate turn of phrase considering the topic—in that we have no recourse but to discuss the distasteful form and dreadful function of the male generative organs. For truly, being the quintessence of Man's fallen nature, having surely devolved from God's sacrosanct image on account of Adam's original sin, they are, at all other times, best kept out of sight and out of mind lest they tempt and shame us again and again and, in the end, ruin us all.

This having been said, any cure for this mental malady most definitely does not lie within the mind itself because, as is incontrovertible, insanity is immune to intellectual argument and moral persuasion alike. Such aberrant impulses and behaviour being beyond the reach of reason, they must be physically—if not forcibly—curtailed and corrected. To this end, the options available to us medical practitioners include the mechanical, the chemical, and, as a last resort...the surgical.

Dr. Seward's Diary

August 15th; Seward's Asylum, Purfleet

Fatigued after invoking Morpheus, I listened to my informant-attendant's report on Renfield with my forehead lowered onto my clasped hands and my eyes closed behind them. But when my spy recounted my patient calling my mentor "a despotic little Dutchman" and pouring forth a torrent of abuse upon him, I reanimated, opening my eyes, raising my head, lowering my hands to my desk, and chuckling despite myself. Following up with a few inquiries, I expressed my gratitude, tendered a gratuity, and charged the man to remain vigilant regarding my favourite inmate vis-à-vis Van Helsing, who, as my former teacher, expects and is due some leeway to act of his own accord inside my asylum. However, the "despotic little Dutchman's" insistence that Renfield should be deprived of human touch is almost more than my conscience can bear. Nevertheless, my qualms come second to my curiosity, for, just as suddenly as Renfield reportedly stopped chafing under his restrictions and struggling against his restraints, he started exclaiming "A kiss! A kiss!" again and again while he pressed his face against the iron bars of his cell's window. Yet when my man finally got the opportunity to look for himself after calming his charge, he saw nothing outside but the gated entrance to the deserted Abbey in the near distance.

Jonathan Harker's Diary

August 16th; Carfax Abbey, Purfleet

Yesterday, I awoke in London's Savoy Hotel, never having felt myself so enthralled by the man lying next to me; but today, I awoke in Purfleet's Carfax Abbey even more inflamed with desire for him. That this was possible can only be due to my experiencing, for the first full day, the freedom that comes from being alone with him and without a care for others. Now able to look upon everyone and everything else about us with indifference, I found departing the Savoy, acquiring our carriage and supplies, and journeying to Purfleet with Berserker to be fleeting, forgettable interludes in my newly realised life of love with its alternating stretches of restraint and fits of lust.

As if my reveries had become reality, the enchanter of my imagination, now made manifest, welcomed me to what he called "our self-sanctified, sinless sanctuary" with a breath-stealing kiss bestowed out in the open, before the estate's gate, for anyone, yet no one, to see. Then following the tracks of the heavily laden carts that had delivered his fifty crates of earth only hours earlier, Vladislaus coaxed our pair of coal-black horses through the dense, murky woodlands encircling and concealing Carfax. Along the way, he had me first doff my hat, next slip off my neck-tie, and at last unbutton my collar and lounge coat to better appreciate the soothing coolness and novel seclusion of our new surroundings.

After unlocking the carriage house and stable, Vladislaus and I went on to open the sprawling, desolate house, with its medieval keep and generations of additions, to our perpetual twilight and the evening air. Finally entering the adjoining chapel, I was surprised to find its otherwise empty stone floor all but covered with the wooden crates filled with forest earth.

Knowing me too well, Vladislaus answered without my asking, "As we sift the soil, we shall scatter it about so that we may make once-consecrated ground holy again—firstly with our sweat and later with our seed."

My eyes widened at his words, and in my stupefaction, my mouth hung open until his lips enveloped mine and once more stole my breath away.

Then murmuring, he continued, "And if, one day, you will forsake everyone and everything else for an eternity of us, lastly with our blood."

Without a moment's thought, with my mind overwhelmed by his heady words and the crates' heady scents, I bit my lip and kissed him long and deep, relishing his tasting me as I cleaved to him. Then lifting my head heavenwards, I pressed his from behind with my grasping hand's splayed fingers and lowered his mouth to my neck.

Wilhelmina Murray's Diary

August 16th; The Crescent, Whitby

After Lucy had hidden herself away with her Countess all yesterday, I lured her out this afternoon, while her new innamorata, as is her wont, lay languishing, to lay fresh flowers upon the fresh graves of her poor Mr. Swales and the *Demeter's* tragic dead. The recent spate of grey skies having broken for the worse, we ventured out under lowering clouds scudding overhead with the selfsame North Sea wind pulling our hatpinned hair and plucking at our posies. Though no storm threatened, I felt a foreboding of menace mounting by the minute the entire time it took us to descend the West Cliff, cross the River Esk, and ascend the East Cliff. When our silent pilgrimage finally ended with our scaling the last of the Church Stairs' 199 steps and setting foot in St. Mary's cemetery, the air felt electric with augury. Looking about vigilantly while Lucy remained oblivious, I sensed, as I had once before in this place and in her company, that we were being watched from some unseen vantage.

But my objective in view eclipsing my blind apprehension, I focused on that and found my patience rewarded when Lucy at last relented as we took our leave of the gossipmonger's grave. "I suppose I ought to thank you, if for nothing else, for sparing me further talk of Count Dracula having had some hand in Mr. Swales's death. After all, if the sad truth must be told, he died no differently than countless other old men, who, in their final moments among us, succumb to the terror of their own end."

Careful to keep my tone composed and measured, I replied, "You're welcome, my dear; however, you must admit that your raising the subject unprompted—if only to dismiss it—makes my point for me."

In no rush to worsen matters between us, my companion waited until we were one-third of the considerable distance to the captain's and first mate's graves before she said, "Wilhelmina, the Count, like the Countess, is not who you think."

Likewise exercising restraint so as not to inflame emotions, I waited until we were halfway to our destination before I calmly countered, "What I think does not matter; what I know does."

"Yes, of course," Lucy unexpectedly agreed before continuing, "but the fact remains that what you know of them pales in comparison to what I know of her and what Jon knows of him."

Upon hearing her assertion—especially its last point—I came to an abrupt realization and an equally abrupt standstill. "Are you saying that my fiancé *knows* that man much like I know that you *know* that woman?"

In answer, Lucy's wind-ruddied face blanched. Flustered, she groped for words long enough for her bloodless cheeks to redden again—this time with a telltale flush of embarrassment. In the end, the tongue-tied girl could only think to say, "What Jon knows he will have to tell you himself."

'Jon'? 'Jon'? Who is this 'Jon' of whom you speak, this man whom I do not know? I opened my mouth to demand of Lucy, only to find myself silenced by another's shout.

"Kidnappers!"

At the accusation hurled in our direction, Lucy and I looked around in alarm to see the elder Colson, Charlie's ne'er-do-well father, bearing down on us from behind a nearby monument. Caught out alone, too far from refuge, and with little hope of rescue, we had no resort but to close ranks and stand together against the drunken lout.

"Tryin' to steal a man's own flesh and blood, are ye?" he roared, his foul breath spewing his vitriol into the turbulent air between us. "And ye think yerselves God-fearin' Christians? Truth be told, ye're naught but thieves!" Then thrusting a filthy finger in our faces, he snarled, "And the worst of the lot for robbin' an ill-fated father of his only livin' child! Gaol's too good for the likes of ye, I say! A sound hidin' is what ye deserve, and, oh, how I wish I were the man to give it!"

Lucy—the new Lucy, the Countess's Lucy—not to be outdone, returned the villain's invective twofold. "And you think yourself ill-used after you debased your wife to feed your vice and abused your son while in its thrall? If anyone should be flogged, it's you, who forfeited your manhood for drink!"

As before on Tate Hill Pier, Colson reared up—this time, to strike down my dear one—but owing once again to an outsider's intervention—on this occasion, the sexton's—his blow likewise never fell. Warned off by the notoriously territorial and temperamental churchyard keeper, who had emerged from his workman's shed not a second too soon for Lucy's sake, our assailant took heed and, after casting our earthly saviour a glance as full of fear as it was of hate, wheeled back round upon us.

“With no wife to do for me, I will have my boy,” he seethed. Then casting a second glance over his shoulder and seeing the sexton on the march, he shouldered his way between the two of us in his haste to depart and to better deliver his ultimatum to Lucy. “Whatever rot the townsfolk think, I, like your friend here, know ye’re no White Lady—and not even a fair lady at that. For I’ve seen ye at the Abbey—seen ye with that queer foreign woman dressed all in black—and witnessed what went on between ye out of sight and in the shadows. Though it turned my stomach, I watched, and, where and when I could, I listened, all the while waitin’ for my moment—for now. So, having heard what I know and what I want, be ye warned. Think no more to make me go without my boy, or ye will go without twice over: first at my unclean hands, and a second time at the clean hands of others! Mark my words and give back what’s mine when I come for him, or ye will wish ye were dead and buried here with your sin!”

Our walk back to The Crescent was a hurried, hushed affair. Though Lucy spoke not a word, I could tell from her strained mien that she was as consumed as I by thoughts of what must be done to counter what is to come. Having no doubt she would confide all that had just transpired to her innamorata to no good end—after all, what can one woman do?—I devised a plan involving no less than two men—a single scheme to serve dual ends: rid Lucy of the elder Colson and rid us of her Countess.