



CHAPTER I

THE ROAD TO CASTLE DRACULA

JONATHAN HARKER'S JOURNAL

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 sign. 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.

3 May. Bistritz. - Left Munich at 8:35 P.M., on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46, but train was an hour late. Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible.

The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most western of splendid bridges over the Danube took us among the traditions of Turkish rule.

Having had some time at my disposal when in London, I had visited the British Museum, and made search among the books and maps in the library regarding Transylvania; it had struck me that some foreknowledge of the country could

hardly fail to have some importance in dealing with a nobleman of that country.

I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay may be very interesting. (*Mem., I must ask the Count all about them.*)

At the station there were groups of people, sometimes crowds, and in all sorts of attire. Some of them were just like the peasants at home or those I saw coming through France and Germany, with short jackets, and round hats, and home-made trousers; but others were very picturesque.

The women looked pretty, except when you got near them, but they were very clumsy about the waist. They had all full white sleeves of some kind or other, and most of them had big belts with a lot of strips of something fluttering from them like the dresses in a ballet, but of course there were petticoats under them.

The strangest figures we saw were the Slovaks, who were more barbarian than the rest, with their big cow-boy hats, great baggy dirty-white trousers, white linen shirts, and enormous heavy leather belts, nearly a foot wide, all studded over with brass nails. They wore high boots, with their trousers tucked into them, and had long black hair and heavy black moustaches. They are very picturesque, but do not look prepossessing. On the stage they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands. They are, however, I am told, very harmless and rather wanting in natural self-assertion.

It was on the dark side of twilight when we got to Bistritz, which is a very interesting old place.

Count Dracula had directed me to go to the Golden Krone Hotel, which I found, to my great delight, to be thoroughly old-fashioned, for of course I wanted to see all I could of the ways of the country.

I was evidently expected, for when I got near the door I faced a cheery-looking elderly woman in the usual peasant dress – white undergarment with a long double apron, front, and back, of coloured stuff fitting almost too tight for modesty. When I came close she bowed and said, “The Herr Englishman?”

“Yes,” I said, “Jonathan Harker.”

She smiled, and gave some message to an elderly man in white shirtsleeves, who had followed her to the door.

He went, but immediately returned with a letter:

“My friend. – Welcome to the Carpathians. I am anxiously expecting you. Sleep well tonight. At three tomorrows the diligence will start for Bukovina; a place on it is kept for you. At the Borgo Pass my carriage will await you and will bring you to me. I trust that your journey from London has been a happy one, and that you will enjoy your stay in my beautiful land. – Your friend, Dracula.”

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