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Dracula

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November 4, 2009

Chapters 1-6

The book opens with Jonathan Harker on a train heading towards a meeting with count Dracula. He has no knowledge of the horror which will face him once he has met the count, but as the reader I do know, within our culture Dracula is well known, so although his fate is as of yet unknown, the fact that Dracula is a vampire, who sucks people's blood, is known to me. This brings up an interesting point, and that is that I have encountered the results of Bram Stoker's work, namely vampire movies and stories which relate back to Dracula, and so I will have a vastly different experience reading the original Dracula story, then people would have had when the novel first came out. Mr. Stoker has in his writing a habit of over describing certain things, and under describing others, for example his description of the Carpathian Mountains is quite detailed, but his description of how Mr. Harker escapes is in fact neglected. This does however at points make the novel more interesting, as it gives me another reason to continue on, to find out more. After chapter four, the novel passes completely from Dracula or anything which really relates to him. The novel begins to follow the lives of Mina, whom Jonathan had referred to with affection, and the life of one of her friends, Lucy and the goings on of a number of her lovers. This brings up another interesting aspect of the novel, and that is

the way in which it is written, as a compilation of letters journals and telegrams. I like this style, and Mr. Stoker does it very well, it keeps the story entertaining, while not confusing. Also a very interesting character is introduced, Mr. Renfield, who shares some characteristics with the vampire, namely his need to consume life, and the cleverness with which he goes about it, but he is clearly not a vampire, so I just thought that he is worth mention.

Chapters 7- 12

Dracula returns, though such is not said in the novel, a strange ship lands in the harbor, which had had a series of most terrible things happen to it, as I progressed through the log of the captain of the ship (who is dead), I became sure that the boat carried Dracula. Lucy, a friend in law of Jonathan Harker who is the only character so far to have encountered Dracula, herself encounters him, and in the middle of the night becomes victim to him. She does not die immediately, but rather over time becomes worse. This allows the characters to slowly discover what is wrong with her, which highlights something interesting about Van Helsing's character, and that is that he seemed to know almost from the start what was wrong with her, but did for some reason not tell the others. It also becomes very evident that the change into a vampire, although not complete does happen during the period whilst someone is still alive. Another thing which is interesting and perhaps comical is the way that the three men who asked Lucy to marry them are all working to save her now, and are all on such good terms.

Chapters 13-18

Here, we see the various ways of combating the un-dead, which can be tied to so many other stories. Garlic had already been used, but now the crucifix, host, stake through the heart, and cutting off of the head are used as well, and to great effect. Renfield does some more interesting stuff, he seems to know things which he could not possibly know, and towards the end of chapter 18 warns that for the good of him and of others, it would be good for him to leave the asylum. Something which I can not ascertain is how exactly Van Helsing feels for Mina. He praises her for all that she does, so much so and with such affection that I think he moves beyond mere friendship, but I know not where to. I also noticed a large inconsistency within vampire lore of today and the novel, and that is that Dracula can move freely during the day in the sun, while in most modern vampire stuff, vampires will literally burn in the sun. I thought it interesting that vampire Lucy was not draining the kids which she was kidnapping, but was leaving them enough blood to survive after a few days rest, I wonder if this was because she was a new vampire, or for some other reason. Also I think that it is interesting that she is described as more attractive after becoming a vampire, than before, something which can definitely be seen in modern vampire stories.

Chapters 19-23

So the main characters begin trying to get and try to find Dracula and kill him. But first they must make it so that his boxes of earth can not afford him a place to hide. This is something which I do not understand. Van Helsing says that Dracula can stay safely in the boxes because the dirt is holy, however if that is all that is special about them, then why not simply, from the perspective of Dracula, go to any church or blessed spot, and stay there? Also this is the first time where I feel that the characters are actually ignorant, first Mina doesn't tell the others about her dream of seeing Dracula, but that can be explained as an affect of her experience with Dracula, however the fact that the others thought nothing of her become pale and weak, shows a lack of attention the girl who they all seem to hold so dear, and I think, ignorance. Also Dracula makes the point that he had defeated nations before, and earlier on he talked about the armies he commanded, I wonder what happened to him, how did he fall into such obscurity? And finally when he was sucking Mina's blood, he made clear that he was targeting her not because it was convenient, but to mess with the main characters, and to take her away from them, I wonder then why he kept coming back, one night would have been enough to begin to slowly take her, I also wonder what effect forcing her to drink his blood has. And finally I must assume that he recognized Jonathan, and would wonder what the realization that he had escaped and survived meant to Dracula. I also think that Renfield's attachment and welcoming towards Mina is interesting, and I think that it must be significant; it appears possible that meeting her alone may have restored his sanity, which speaks to her power.

Chapters 24-Note

So they finally kill Dracula and his wives, however Van Helsing had made a point that the disease which is to be vampire easily spreads, so they triumph, but I wonder why they assume there are no more vampires, or if they perhaps don't make that assumption. I also thought the change in Mina was interesting to watch, and the fact that she would become more vampire like, as time passed, but until she was dead she would not fully become a vampire. I also thought that Dracula's lack of activity aboard the boat bound for Romania was interesting. On his way to England he needed to eat the small crew, so why when going back did he not eat one? I also do not understand Dracula's logic in traveling in his little box, he can obviously survive during the day, in open, and alive although his powers are diminished, so wouldn't that be desirable, at least then he could hide or fight with conventional means, this is something I do not understand. I like the ending, it is not overly dramatic, but is enough so, not to be anticlimactic, which is good. I am pleased that at least one member of the group died, I think it was necessary, and I guess that it is fitting that it is he who was described as being such a man of men. I also like the note at the end, which shows the family happy together, not wishing to forget what has happened, but knowing that nobody would ever believe them.