

BRAM STOKER AND A—E

**POWERS
OF DARKNESS**

The Unique Version of Dracula

Foreword by Professor Clive Bloom

Translated and Presented
by Rickard Berghorn

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Emil Åberg



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Author, literary historian, publisher, and student of history of science and ideas. See catalogues at King's Library, Stockholm, www.kb.se (Libris and Regina), and the database at Uppsala University, www.uu.diva-portal.org.

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Powers of Darkness

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I must have fallen asleep, for the last thing I remember is that I suddenly woke up with a feeling as though I had been hit by an electric shock and a very definite sensation of not being alone. It was now considerably darker, as dark as it can ever be in the summer and at this height. The six large windows stood out as lighter oblongs against the surrounding twilight, and I could even dimly make out the outline of some furniture in their vicinity. However, in my confusion at this sudden awakening, I could not at all understand where I was; it seemed to me as if I had been removed to an unknown world, and my entire being still trembled under the impression of a few words that had just been whispered into my ear—so I thought—and which I half-mechanically repeated to myself: *“At her feet or in her arms—two flames uniting—kisses, kisses—what all the gold on earth cannot buy—”* “—a love like burning hate and a hate like consuming love!”

They were the Count’s words when he told me the history of the portrait, but in a completely different, caressing, enchanting, tempting tone, which made me dizzy and made my blood clog around my heart. Half-conscious, I sank back again on the cushions; the fragrance of the honeysuckle felt suffocating in the night air.

Just then, everything was illuminated by the bright electric light of two large flaming flashes of heat lightning, almost immediately following upon each other. In the glow of these *she* was suddenly before me—quite close—dazzling—like a white flame—with the same enigmatically tempting smile as when I first saw her eyes of blue fire, burning into my brain and causing my strength and will to melt like wax. I saw her thus for a few seconds only, slender and yet voluptuous, against the dim light in the room; then it was dark again, and dazzled as I was, I could not distinguish—But I felt, felt in my entire being, that she was coming closer, that she was leaning over me—I was paralysed, as if bound by a spell, though my heart and every pulse was beating as in a fever; and a burning passion, which I had never suspected before, clouded my senses and my reason.

I have heard men speak of this—have known men who have become miserable, betraying their faith and honour and violating the laws of God and mankind for the sake of a woman!—and I have despised their weakness. I despise them still—but also myself. I know now that I am not better than they. As an eternal reminder of this, I am now forcing myself to write down the whole truth—even though, on the other hand, I hardly know if I am doing right in this, since these notes could fall into the hands of Wilma, causing her grief—But I owe even her the truth. Wilma—my pure, faithful Wilma. Never could I have believed that the thought of her would be so painful to me.

— — —

Once again the quiet, flaming glow blazed, ghostly and otherworldly—it showed me her lovely face close to my own, leaning over me, her eyes holding my eyes; the red, swelling, longing red lips half open, the sparkling jewel upon her white bare bosom. I saw how she sank to her knees, next to the bench on which I was lying—in the next moment it was dark again, and, dizzy and half-conscious, I felt as if I were sinking into an abyss, where the numbing, thick fragrance of the honeysuckles became as one with the soft entangling female arms that were wrapping themselves around me, and with the fire of passion burning in my veins. I felt her breath, warm

and intoxicating, on my face—felt a pair of swelling lips pressing against my neck in a long, burning kiss that made every fibre of my being tremble with shuddering lust and anguish—and in a reckless delirium I locked the beautiful apparition in my arms—

— — —

How much time passed, I do not know. But suddenly I was shaken by something like the unnerving start we sometimes experience on the verge of falling asleep, imagining that we are falling from an immeasurable height, as violently as if limb were torn from limb. I felt her, as it were, melting away from my arms, which, powerless and numb, released their hold, and I felt a sharp pain passing through my body—a sharp light illumined the room—not a flash of lightning this time, but the glow of a lamp. I heard a violent exclamation—it seemed to me like a curse—in a foreign language, recognising the Count's voice, and the next moment I saw him standing before me, where he was illuminating my face with the old-fashioned lamp he always carried.

“By Satan, young man, *you dare to defy me?*” he exclaimed in German with a voice so trembling with barely restrained fury that it sounded like the snarl of a predator more than anything else; even his face, its lips drawn back from the sharp, white teeth in a convulsive grin, resembled at the moment a predator more than a man. “What are *you* doing here, at this hour? You will learn that Draculitz is the master of his own house!”

While speaking, he fiercely shut all the windows, which trembled under his powerful hands. He had put the lamp down on the floor, and the light from below gave a strange, demonic expression to his dark face, whose thick white mane of hair seemed to be bristling like that of an enraged lion.

I had arisen halfway, dizzy and light-headed, and searched in vain for words, whether for an explanation or an apology.

For a few seconds he remained standing, staring at me with eyes that literally shone red in the candlelight. Then he said, curtly and commandingly:

“Lie down.”

Passively and half-mechanically I sank back on the cushions.

He picked up the lamp, brought it close to my head, and examined my face and neck with an oddly tense expression. Then his lips pulled into a grim smile.

“My young friend,” he said, in that sudden transition from brutal ferocity to suave courtesy to which I have now become almost accustomed, “you should recall that I have previously uttered a warning—a warning that you, in the usual recklessness of youth, have not seen fit to consider, since I, to my astonishment, find you here at this hour. I repeat once again, and in the strongest terms, that *you would do best to avoid these rooms after dark*. You have been careless enough to fall asleep here—with the windows wide open, contrary to my firmly stated wish. The bats swarm here around our old walls, as you have seen for yourself, and I have told you that they can be dangerous. What I have feared has indeed happened, for you have been attacked in your sleep—”

“Attacked?” I stammered, confused.

“Attacked by the bats. They suck blood. *Blood!*—Suck the life and strength of those

they surprise during sleep. You bear traces of their teeth there on your throat—”

Shuddering I brought my hand with an involuntary motion to the place where he pointed—it was exactly where two soft lips had recently rested in a long burning kiss, and I felt the blood rise to my head again at this recollection.

The Count was still watching me with a half-deceitful, half-mocking gaze.

“Ah, my young friend,” he resumed with a peculiar emphasis, “believe me, here in the Carpathians we know the dangers of the night better than you—the children of the civilised West! Such wounds are more dangerous than you can imagine. They may start to bleed again—so let me with an experienced hand—”

I saw his wax-coloured, claw-like hands floating in the air above my face, as it were, and I seemed to feel that he, with odd, light movements, was stroking my forehead and eyes, and then went down toward the neck.

But from this point my memory is clouded. As I said, I only remember that I awoke suddenly, lying clothed on my own bed with the Count standing beside me, smiling slightly and telling me that he had found me there and taken the liberty of waking me, since I seemed to be troubled by unpleasant dreams, and that he advised me to undress and go to bed, as it was already between one and two at night—and that I indifferently and drowsily obeyed him. When I awoke next, it was late in the morning.

— — —

I have written down everything, briefly and fragmentarily, yet detailed enough to convince myself further that what I have recounted here cannot have been a dream—at least not a dream in the usual sense. Moreover, I have been up there once again, albeit in full daylight ...

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