

Without another word he made the operation. For a few moments the breathing continued to be stertorous. Then there came a breath so prolonged that it seemed as though it would tear open his chest. Suddenly his eyes opened, and became fixed in a wild, helpless stare. This was continued for a few moments; then it softened into a glad surprise, and from the lips came a sigh of relief. He moved convulsively, and as he did so, said-

"I'll be quiet, Doctor. Tell them to take off the strait -waistcoat. I have had a terrible dream, and it has left me so weak that I cannot move. What's wrong with my face? it feels all swollen, and it smarts dreadfully". He tried to turn his head; but even with the effort his eyes seemed to grow glassy again so I gently put it back. Then Van Helsing said in a quiet grave tone:-

"Tell us your dream, Mr. Renfield". As he heard the voice his face brightened, through its mutilation, and he said:-

"That is Dr. Van Helsing. How good it is of you to be here. Give me some water, my lips are dry; and I shall try to tell you what I dreamed" - he stopped and seemed fainting. I called quietly to Quincey-"The brandy-it is in my study-quick!" He flew and returned with a glass, the decanter of brandy and a carafe of water. We moistened the parched lips, and the patient quickly revived. It seemed, however, that his poor injured brain had been working in the interval, for, when he was quite conscious, he looked at me piercingly with an agonised confusion which I shall never forget, and said:- "I must not deceive myself; it was no dream, but after all a grim reality." Then his eyes roved round the room: as they caught sight of the two figures sitting patiently on the edge of the bed he went on:-

"If I were not sure already, I would know from them." For an instant his eyes closed-not with pain or sleep but voluntarily, as though he were bringing all his faculties to bear; when he opened them he said, hurriedly, and with more energy than he had yet displayed:-

"Quick, Doctor, quick. I am dying! I feel that I have but a few minutes; and then I must go back to death-or worse! Wet my lips with brandy again. I have something that I must say before I die; or before my poor crushed brain dies anyhow. Thank you! It was that night after you left me, when I implored you to let me go away. I couldn't speak then, for I felt my tongue was tied; but I was as sane then, except in that way, as I am now. I was in agony of despair for a long time after you left me; it seemed hours. Then there came a sudden peace to me. My brain seemed to become cool again, and I realised where I was. I heard the dogs bark behind our house, but not where he was!" As he spoke, Van Helsing's eyes never blinked, but his hand came out and met mine and gripped it hard. He did not however, betray himself; he nodded slightly and said: "Go on," in a low voice. Renfield proceeded:-

"He came up to a window in the mist, as I had seen him often before; but he was solid then -- not a ghost, and his eyes were fierce like a man's when angry. He was laughing with his red mouth; the sharp white teeth glistened in the moonlight when he turned to look back over the belt of trees, to where the dogs were barking. I wouldn't ask him to come in at first, though I knew he wanted to—just as he had wanted all along. Then he began promising me things--not in words but by doing them." He was interrupted by a word from the Professor:-

"How?"

“By making things happen; just as he used to send in the flies when the sun was shining. Great big fat ones with steel and sapphire on their wings; and big moths, in the night, with skull and cross-bones on their backs.” Van Helsing nodded to him as he whispered to me unconsciously:--

“The *Acherontia Aitetrops of the Sphinges*-- what you call the ‘Death’s-head Moth’?”. The patient went on without stopping.

Then he began to whisper; “Rats, rats. rats! Hundreds, thousands, millions of them, and every one a life; and dogs to eat them, and cats too. All lives! All red blood, with years of life in it; and not merely buzzing flies!” I laughed at him, for I wanted to see what he could do. Then the dogs howled, away beyond the dark trees in his house. He beckoned me to the window. I got up and looked out, and he raised his hands, and seemed to call out without using any words. A dark mass spread over the grass, coming on like the shape of a flame of fire; and then he moved the mist to the right and left, and I could see that there were thousands of rats with their eyes blazing red--like his, only smaller. He held up his hand, and they all stopped; and I thought he seemed to be saying: ‘All these lives I will give you, ay, and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you will fall down and worship me!’ And then a red cloud, like the colour of blood, seemed to close over my eyes, and before I knew what I was doing, I found myself opening the sash and saying to him: “Come in, Lord and Master!” The rats were all gone, but he slid into the room through the sash, though it was only open an inch wide--just as the Moon herself has often come in through the tiniest crack and has stood before me in all her size and splendour”.

His voice was weaker, so I moistened his lips with the brandy again, and he continued; but seemed as though his memory had gone on working in the interval for his story was further advanced. I was about to call him back to the point, but Van Helsing whispered to me:” Let him go on. Do not interrupt him; he cannot go back, and maybe could not proceed at all if once he lost the thread of his thought.” He proceeded:--

“All day I waited to hear from him, but he did not send anything, not even a blow-fly and when the moon got up I was pretty angry with him. When he slid in through the window, though it was shut, and he did not even knock, I got mad with him. He sneered at me, and his white face looked out of the mist with his red eyes gleaming, and he went on as though he owned the whole place, and I was no one. He didn’t even smell the same as he went by me. I couldn’t hold him. I thought that somehow, Mrs. Harker had come into the room.”

The two men sitting on the bed stood up and came over, standing behind him so that he could not see them, but where they could hear better. They were both silent, but the Professor started and quivered; his face, however, grew grimmer and sterner still. Renfield went on without noticing:--

“When Mrs. Harker came in to see me this afternoon she wasn’t the same: It was like tea after the teapot had been watered.” Here we all moved, but no one said a word; he went on:--