

DRACULA, A LOVE STORY

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SCRIPT PREVIEW

ACT I

Scene 1

*(Dark stage, illuminated by spotlight towards one side. In it, a young woman and a middle-aged man are slowly walking forward, sharing an umbrella, which the man holds. His name is **VLAD TEPES**; hers is **LUCY SEWARD**. The sound of soft rain is audible; perhaps accompanied by the sound of a car driving down a rain-slicked street.)*

LUCY: That was hard.

TEPES: It was sweet of you to come. I know Mina's parents appreciated it. She had been sick so long, most of her friends had forgotten her.

LUCY: There's no wake?

TEPES: *(Shakes head.)* They won't embalm her. She had to be buried within twenty-four hours of death. They'll sit *shiva* for twelve days.

LUCY: Did you know her well?

TEPES: I could see her from my window sometimes, at dusk, climbing trees, wrestling with the other children. She laughed constantly. I remember that. *(Shakes his head.)* To die at twenty like that... *(Looks at **LUCY**.)* Are you all right?

LUCY: No. *(Shudders.)* I have to stop.

TEPES: Of course. *(They stop moving. **LUCY** leans against **TEPES** a little bit.)*

LUCY: I'm scared to death. (**TEPAS'** arm moves up to her shoulders.) I mean, my dad keeps telling me that I'll beat it, I'll get better, but I'm not feeling any better.

TEPES: I understand.

LUCY: I'll be all right in a few minutes. This has happened before.

TEPES: You were brave to do this on foot.

LUCY: It was just next door.

TEPES: It's been a long walk for you. I admire you for it.

LUCY: I'm all right now.

TEPES: Would you care to lean on me?

LUCY: May I? Would that be all right?

TEPES: Of course. (*He puts his arm around her and they resume walking, slowly.*)

LUCY: It was so sad. (*Beat.*) Vlad?

TEPES: What?

LUCY: Do you believe in...you know?

TEPES: (*Beat.*) God? Miracles? The perfectibility of man? (*Looks down at LUCY; smiles.*) Santa Claus?

LUCY: Life after death.

TEPES: (*Considers this.*) I believe we are...immortal.

LUCY: You do?

TEPES: Ah, Lucy. We humans, we imagine ourselves all to be scientists. We want our proofs. And without proof, we believe nothing. And because the dead don't come back and talk to us, we imagine them gone forever. But we know nothing about this. About anything, really. There was a time when we believed the sun revolved around the earth. And we thought we knew everything about astronomy. There was a time we believed the electron was the smallest unit of matter. And we thought we knew everything about that. So

everything we know might be wrong. I choose to *believe*, instead. I believe we are immortal.

LUCY: Somehow, I'm not comforted.

TEPES: *(Turns around, faces **LUCY**, and puts one hand on her shoulder while holding the umbrella in the other. They stare at each other.)* Lucy. You *will* get better. Whatever happens. You *will* get better. *(Flash of lightning, sound of thunder, rain sound is more intense.)*

LUCY: *(Continuing to look at **TEPES**.)* It's starting to pick up.

TEPES: *(Continuing to look at **LUCY**.)* Yes. Yes it is. Beautiful! Let's step out into the rain.

LUCY: *(Continuing to look at **TEPES**, smiling)* What?

TEPES: It's so warm tonight. The rain is warm too. The air – smell it! It's alive with the smell of the earth and everything under it. Ahh – glorious. *(Smiling at Lucy, he hands her the umbrella and steps outside of its protection, stretching luxuriously and holding his face up towards the rain.)* Come here, Lucy!

LUCY: I can't. This is a new blouse!

TEPES: Lucy, it's water. Water is *life*. It *reeks* of it. Don't think about your clothes. Think about life. Life feels good. *(There is the faint sound of hyenas, which neither notice. **LUCY** looks at him for a moment, then folds down the umbrella and steps towards him as the lights go down.)*

*(Lights immediately up on the other half of the stage. They reveal a well-appointed living room, in which a beautiful couch and a large-screen television face the audience. There are assorted chairs which can be moved around for television viewing on the sl wall. A middle-aged man and a man in his late twenties sit on the couch. The older man is **BILL SEWARD**, **LUCY's** father. The younger man is **JON HARKER**, her fiancée. There is thunder, lightening and the sound of heavy rain in the background, as well as the faint sound of a hyena, which neither notice.)*

SEWARD: *(Glancing at watch.)* They should be home by now.

HARKER: Maybe it got out late. *(Looks at **SEWARD**.)* Do these things...you know, "get out" at a specific time?

SEWARD: Well, obviously, they don't last forever.

HARKER: Because I wouldn't have made such an effort to get down here early if I knew that she was going to be at a...wake, or whatever. (*Stands up; begins to pace.*)

SEWARD: It wasn't a wake. It was a brief memorial service for Mina. Lucy decided to go at the last minute. You know how impulsive she is. Remember how she acted at your engagement party? I should have told her you were coming tonight, but I wanted to surprise her.

HARKER: And why is she going to a wake? I can't imagine anything less helpful to someone suffering from depression.

SEWARD: I wish to God that's all that it was.

HARKER: Oh, come on, Bill. What else could it be? I go off to New York, three weeks later she's moping around like Winona Ryder in *Heathers*.

SEWARD: I didn't see that film, Jon. Did Winona Ryder suffer partial paralysis or have days when she couldn't get out of bed or have to drop out of school?

HARKER: It's been a while since I watched it. The point is that you've given her test after test and you haven't found any explanation for her symptoms. Now you're having your house scoured for environmental irritants. Has she been any better since you moved into the – Castle Shazaam?

SEWARD: Tepes. No.

HARKER: (*Walking around.*) I thought you said he was a lobbyist.

SEWARD: He is. For Sunlit Health. The big HMO. A little ironic, since it seems like he only works at night.

HARKER: I heard Truman Capote was like that. (*beat*) Must make good money at it. In New York a house like this'd go for ten million, easy.

SEWARD: He comes from money. His family was minor royalty in Rumania.

HARKER: You're shittin' me! (*Paces around a little bit more.*) Just watch. She'll be better once she sees me. I should

have taken her to New York. I would have kept her busy. We'd have seen shows; had parties; she would have met a whole different class of people. You know who I met the other day? Latrell Sprewell (**SEWARD** does not react.) You know? (Pantomimes choking someone. **SEWARD** still does not react; **HARKER** gives up) She could even work in the homeless shelter if she promises not to bring any of them back with her.

SEWARD: Holy God! Remember that?

HARKER: How could I forget? I thought you were going to hemorrhage!

SEWARD: How many kids did that woman have? Four? Five?

HARKER: (*Chuckles*). Lucy told me you called in the cleaning SWAT team. She was furious. (*There is an extremely loud clap of thunder. **SEWARD** looks at the floor.*) Bill? It was funny!

SEWARD: We talk about her like she's already gone. (**LUCY** and **TEPES** emerge through door upstage center. They are, of course, dripping wet. They are talking to each other until **LUCY** notices **HARKER**.)

LUCY: Jon! (Runs over to **HARKER** and hugs him fiercely. **HARKER** is a little taken aback.)

HARKER: Lucy! You're soaked. (**LUCY** continues to cling to him.) Now I'm soaked.

SEWARD: You lose the umbrella, Vlad?

TEPES: We gave in to the elements. (*Pulls **SEWARD** aside and talks to him confidentially.*) Bill, I've never seen her better. She was engaged; she had some energy; she almost made it all the way back without stopping. She was – *healthy*.

LUCY: Could I sit down now? (**HARKER** leads her to the couch, where she sits down. She is obviously extremely fatigued and can barely keep her head up.)

TEPES: I'll have Renfield bring you some hot tea and your robe.

LUCY: No, don't bother. (*Waves him off. **HARKER** takes off his suit jacket and drapes it around her shoulders.*)

Vlad, I'd like you to meet my fiancée, Jon Harker. Jon, this is our host, Vlad Tepes.

HARKER: *(Shaking hands.)* I've been admiring your place, Vlad. It's brilliant. What is that piece over there? *(Gestures to painting.)* It looks like a Picasso.

TEPES: It is a Picasso.

HARKER: *(Whistles).* Do you mind if I asked how much that set you back?

TEPES: My family bought it for about a thousand dollars U.S. *(Smiles at **HARKER's** look of amazement.)* Before anyone had heard of him. But that's just a piece of cloth with some colorful oil on it! *I've* been admiring your wife-to-be. My dear young man! *(Walks to **HARKER**, takes both hands in his own).* There is nothing better than a good marriage! With it, every defeat is endurable. Without it, every triumph is hollow!

HARKER: Well, that's what everybody's been telling me. I've got too much money and been having too much sex, so I'd better get married. *(**TEPES** winces and drops **HARKER's** hands. **LUCY** steps over to **TEPES** and puts an arm around him protectively.)*

TEPES: Well, I'd better look in on Francesca and prepare for work. My friends, please help yourself to a nightcap or two; Bill, you know where the whiskey is. Lucy *(takes **Lucy's** hand, bows at the waist, and kisses it)*, as always, my time with you is blessed. *(Looking at **Lucy**)* Mr. Harker, congratulations again for your incredible good fortune. *(Exits SR).*

LUCY: *(When **TEPES** is gone.)* Oh, God, Jon, you are such an ass! His wife is upstairs on life support.

HARKER: Jesus!

LUCY: She's been comatose for eleven years.

HARKER: Well, how would I know? Why didn't you tell me, Bill?

SEWARD: I didn't expect you to attack the institution of marriage.

HARKER: I was joking! Look, I'm sorry. This is all my fault. For three months I've heard nothing but how sick you've been. Tonight, after a not entirely pleasant day at the brokerage, I drove five hours down Route 95, which was also not an entirely pleasant experience, and where are you? At some woman's wake. Not exactly letting the good times roll, is it? Now I find out I'll be sharing quarters with a woman who has been comatose for eleven years. But it's all right. It's my fault, really, for not adjusting more quickly. Can we just start over? (*Once more there is a blinding flash of light, a huge blast of thunder -- then the stage falls into complete darkness.*) Jesus Christ!

A NEW VOICE: Be patient, Mr. Harker. The generator will switch on in a moment. (*Lights up, appreciably dimmer than before. A man dressed in a dark suit has entered.*) The master arranged for a backup generator in case we ever lost power. To keep the Countess's machinery going, of course.

HARKER: The Countess?

THE MAN IN THE DARK SUIT: The Countess Dracula. (*When no one responds.*) Mrs. Tepes.

HARKER: Oh, right! Bill mentioned that Tepes was -- ah, royalty in Romania. (*Peers at **MAN IN DARK SUIT**.*) Who are you?

MAN IN DARK SUIT: I am Mr. (*delays dramatically*) Renfield. I am the master's humble servant -- and yours.

HARKER: (*Owlishly*). Well, Mr. (*delays dramatically*) Renfield -- humble servants are the best kind.

RENFIELD: I took the liberty of placing your luggage in the blue guest room at the end of the upstairs hall.

SEWARD: Yes, well, thank you very much, Mr. Renfield. I'll show him the way. I think I've had enough adventure for tonight. I'm ready for bed.

LUCY: Me, too.

HARKER: Wait, my dear. I'll accompany you to your room to make certain you're not waylaid by spirits. (*Winks lewdly at **MR. RENFIELD**, who ignores him.*)

MR. RENFIELD: I'll tidy up here. (**SEWARD, HARKER** and **LUCY** exit. **MR. RENFIELD** sits down on couch, facing audience. When they are gone he withdraws a small animal from his coat pocket and grins at it. The animal begins to squeak.) There, there, my sweet little pet. (**MR. RENFIELD** caresses the animal.) We're all nothing more than part of the great circle of life. (**Picks animal up by its tail, holds it over his open mouth.**) Down the hatch! (**Drops animal into his mouth, bites down hard. Blood comes out of his mouth and drips down his chin. MR. RENFIELD** laughs horribly as the lights go down quickly.)