

Vampyr

A man is walking down the narrow riverside path that winds its way towards the spot where a ferry crosses to the other bank. It is a summer evening, after sunset. The traveler, Nikolas, is carrying a rucksack, and in his hand a pair of fishing rods. He wants to spend his holiday in solitude, which is why he has come to this remote region in search of peace.

He arrives at the old inn and finds the door closed. The inn is lying in profound silence, as if all its occupants have gone to bed. Nikolas rattles at the door, but it is well and truly locked. At this moment he sees a reaper walking along with his scythe over his shoulder. He looks at the man curiously as he walks down towards the ferry. He shouts after him:

NIKOLAS

Hello, you there!

But the reaper, not hearing his cry, continues on his way. The landscape is bathed in a gray, dim twilight; every object has a tinge of unreality. Nikolas goes round to the back of the house. There he discovers a window in which a light can be seen. He comes nearer, knocks on the window pane and listens; but not a sound reaches him. Simultaneously the light goes out. Nikolas knocks again. Silence still. But now a window is opened quietly on the floor above, and a timid child's voice asks:

CHILD'S VOICE

Who's there?

Nikolas runs his eye up the facade of the house and discovers a little girl of thirteen with a gentle, frightened face. She says to him:

GIRL

I'll come down and open the door.

She gestures, indicating that he is to go to the front door. Then she carefully closes the window.

As Nikolas stands waiting, he glances down in the direction of the ferry. The ferryman - who has a white beard - boards the ferry-boat which begins crossing the river. He goes backwards and forwards, pulling laboriously at the iron chains which run rattling and squealing round the ungreased wheels.

Meanwhile the little girl has opened the door of the inn. She is a strange child. She looks rather small for her age and wears spectacles. Her eyes are moist, as if she has just been crying. When she talks to somebody she tilts her head backwards.

Nikolas enters, and the girl shuts the door behind him. He slips his rucksack from off his shoulders. As he is doing so a door opens a few inches and a face appears, staring inquisitively. The little girl gives a sign to Nikolas to follow her up the stair leading to the guest rooms. She lights a candle in a little enamel candlestick of the kind found in country districts, and hands him the candlestick.

On the floor above, the doors out onto the passage are standing open. The

rooms are poorly furnished, the beds without bedclothes, the windows dirty, as if they have not been cleaned for a long time. The little girl conducts Nikolas to a spartanly furnished room. On a table he finds a candlestick with a half-used candle, beside which are lying another candle and a box of matches. He lights the candle. The girl, who has remained standing in the doorway, says with an inclination of the head:

GIRL

Good night, sir!

NIKOLAS

Good night!

The girl disappears and shuts the door behind her. He glances round the room. Over the bed hangs one of those copperplate engravings, framed in glass, that are so common in the country. Nikolas looks at the engraving for a moment. It represents something like 'Death pays a call.' Then from a neighboring room he hears a woman sobbing.

Close-up: Nikolas turning and listening. He opens the door a few inches. A man's voice is heard trying to calm the woman, but she is incapable of mastering her despair. She breaks out, in a voice choked with tears:

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh, why did he have to die - why should I have to lose him ... why, why?

MAN'S VOICE

(consolingly)

Don't cry!

WOMAN'S VOICE

(in despair)

My little boy, my little boy!

The weeping eases off.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh God, oh God!

We hear a door opening, followed by footsteps; then everything is quiet again.

Nikolas, who had lifted the light to look at the engraving, puts it down, and after locking the door crosses to the window to pull down the blind. First, however, he looks out across the river, where he sees the reaper with the scythe sitting on the railing of the ferry-boat, while the ferryman continues his monotonous progress up and down like the ferryman on the river separating life and death. Then Nikolas draws down the blind. It is one of those blinds, often seen in the country, that have some painted motif: a temple, a forest or the like. He takes out his watch. The sound of the watch continues during the following shot, which shows the shadow of the house creeping slowly over the ground - a symbol of time passing.

A moment later we return to the room. Nikolas has been asleep for some time. Somewhere in the house a clock strikes eleven; then we hear the footsteps of somebody approaching and knocking on the door: two knocks - and again two knocks. In his deep sleep Nikolas seems to hear the knocking without taking

it in fully. He reacts while still half asleep, turns his head towards the door and sees the handle slowly turning. Then the door is opened, inch by inch, as if by an invisible hand. A man enters the room, wearing a full-length dressing-gown. Without a sound he approaches the bed and leans over Nikolas.

MAN

Are you asleep?

Almost unconsciously Nikolas opens his eyes and meets the stranger's enquiring gaze.

MAN

Wake up!

Nikolas looks at him in astonishment and asks, almost in a whisper:

NIKOLAS

Who are you!

The stranger, whose whole bearing and behavior indicate unease and nervousness, straightens up, crosses the room, pulls up the blind, and stands so that the moonlight falls on his face, which shows traces of recent suffering. He takes out a handkerchief and mops his brow with a nervous movement ... like a man dreading a catastrophe. Then he says:

MAN

Sh!

Nikolas looks at him in growing amazement. The stranger continues to stand there, as if his thoughts are somewhere quite apart. Then he seems to remember where he is and why he has come. He again goes right up to the bed and leans over Nikolas. In broken syllables he stammers out the words:

MAN

She mustn't die ... do you hear? ... She's dying, she's dying!

The stranger speaks like a man in dire need, one who in his agony doesn't know where to turn for help. Suddenly - without transition he turns away and crosses to the door. There he stops, apparently absorbed in his own thoughts. Absently he raises a thumb to his lips, looks at it and licks it. Then he puts a hand in his dressing-gown pocket and takes out a parcel the size of a book. He puts the parcel down, takes his leave with a polite inclination of the head, and goes out.

Nikolas sits half up in bed, tormented by doubt. Has he been dreaming? Has there really been anybody in his room? He lights a match and looks at his watch. It is five past eleven. Then he gets up, goes to the door and tries it; it is firmly locked. He looks at the blind; the blind is up. And on the table lies the parcel. Some words are written on it:

To be opened after my death!

Nikolas is unable to go back to sleep. A dying man has called on him. He cannot ignore this call! He must go and look for the man who has asked for

help. He starts putting his clothes on.

Outside, the shadow of the inn creeps further and further over the ground - time is passing.

Nikolas has crept stealthily down the stairs and stolen out of the door without waking the people in the inn. The moon is shining, so that everything is clearly visible. He takes a few steps, then stops irresolutely. Which way shall he go? It is, in truth, a hopeless task that he has undertaken, since this stranger has given him no information whatsoever. As he stands like this, he suddenly catches sight of a shadow gliding down the white road. It is the shadow of a man - a man with a wooden leg - followed by the shadow of a dog. Nikolas stands stock-still for a moment, utterly bewildered. Yes, it quite definitely is a shadow - and *only* a shadow. There is no man or dog to be seen. The man's shadow stops, turns slowly and looks all round. With mounting astonishment Nikolas watches to see what will happen next.

The man's shadow walks on and joins a group of other shadows engaged in digging a grave in the shadow of a tree. We see these shadows of grave diggers as they dig their shovels deep in the earth and throw up shadows of shovelfuls onto a heap of earth which likewise is a shadow. One of the shadows in the grave stops when the shadow of the man with the dog comes up to him. After a short conversation between the two men, the shadow of the man with the dog turns, takes a few paces in the direction whence he came, and beckons to somebody.

Nikolas looks in the same direction and sees a weird procession: two men's shadows, sharply outlined against the light road, walking slowly along, carrying a dead body. The limply hanging arms and dangling legs show clearly that it is a human body. The whole procession of shadows is utterly fantastic.

Nikolas follows the happenings with the keenest attention; the shadow of the man with the dog gives an order; they start laying the body in the grave; then the shadow of the man with the dog moves away.

Nikolas has an impulse to follow this shadow. A voice inside him tells him that there must be some connection between the apparition in the room of the inn and this phenomenon of the shadows. He follows the shadow, which suddenly leaves the road and disappears through a door or opening in the wall of a factory. This factory is, strictly speaking, only the ruins of a factory which has been derelict for many years. Half of the window panes are broken, and those remaining are covered in dirt and cobwebs. The tumble-down factory looks dismal and fantastic in the moonlight and makes one think of a gigantic churchyard.

Nikolas enters the factory by the same opening through which the shadow disappeared. The room Nikolas enters is a small, bare, square room, full of rubble and stones, through which Nikolas carefully threads his way. There are two doors. Nikolas tries one, which leads into a room with no other exit; then he opens the other and comes into a room with another door. When Nikolas opens this latter door, he finds a steep staircase behind it. Nikolas treads gingerly on the stairs to see if they creak; then he goes up the stairs. When he reaches the top, he finds himself facing another door. Just as he is about to open this, he hears through the door footsteps echoing over the tiled floor. Nikolas stands rooted to the spot. The steps come nearer, and as they do so we see under the door a steadily increasing shaft of light. He can hear

that they are the footsteps of a man. He watches the door as if hypnotized. The man on the other side has stopped; now the door handle moves, and a key is turned. Then the footsteps die away.

Nikolas, who has hardly dared to draw breath for fear of giving himself away, tries the door handle. To his surprise the door opens. The man, whose steps can no longer be heard, has evidently unlocked the door for an expected visit.

Nikolas opens the door wide and goes in. He finds himself in a room resembling a corridor. A little way along there is a door. Nikolas tiptoes up to it and opens it. The room into which it leads is empty. Nikolas is about to turn back into the corridor when he hears a door slam. He peeps out through the partly open door. There now enters, by the door through which he himself has passed a moment ago, an old woman of erect bearing, who holds her head high and proudly. She must be very old. Her skin is pale as wax, yellowish and drawn tight over her cheek-bones. Her movements are stiff and resolute; she supports herself on a stick, which strikes the tiles with sharp, regular clicks. The old woman is blind. Her eyes are covered with a film and have a dead look. Her lips are thin. Her whole face bears the stamp of cruelty.

The moonlight shines through the window, outlining its cruciform frame sharply on the floor or the wall. When the blind woman reaches the window, she opens it with her stick before continuing on her way, and the shadow of the cross disappears. She goes through the door behind which Nikolas has hidden, and he decides to follow her. Suddenly she stops, throws her head back and sniffs the air like a dog. Nikolas stops too. She turns abruptly and says:

BLIND WOMAN

Who's there?

Nikolas waits as quiet as a mouse. The blind woman is reassured and walks on. Nikolas follows. But at the first turn of the corridor she vanishes.

Nikolas stands speechless for a moment. Then another remarkable thing happens: a sound which has no connection with the preceding scene reaches his ear. It is the sound of music, and the tune being played has a dancing rhythm, faintly reminiscent of a slow mazurka. Nikolas listens for a second, then takes a few steps in the direction of the sound and turns into a corridor, at the end of which there is a door. When he opens this, it is as if the music, cooped up behind the closed door, now rushes at him like a wave falling back to its original level. The music seems to come from some apertures in the wall. They are like organ pipes; at all events the music swells from them as from an enormous organ. The same blind woman now appears in a corner of the room. She stops. She makes a sign with her stick, and the music stops.

From the opposite corner of the room a curious figure now comes towards her: a lame man as thin as a beanstalk. But in spite of his lameness he moves with great agility; he looks remarkably like a great wading bird. Involuntarily he uncovers his head and holds his hat in his hand while talking to the blind woman. She gives him a curt order and walks on, finally disappearing in the factory's labyrinth of passages and corridors.

The shadow of the man with the wooden leg sits down on a bench on which his real 'ego' is also sitting ... A man comes up to him. They whisper together.

The new arrival is an unpleasant character with pig's eyes, a flat nose, a low forehead and sparse, stiff bristles. He has an underhung jaw and a powerful chin. There is something bestial about his appearance. The two men walk over to a window niche, where a man is lying asleep on the floor, huddled up like a dog. As the one-legged man wakes the sleeper with a kick from his wooden leg, the man with the pig's eyes pulls out his knife and tests the cutting edge with his thumb. The sleeper has sharp features and a hardened expression, as if his face has been carved in wood. As he gets up he scratches his unshaven cheek with a bent forefinger. Then all three disappear.

Nikolas catches sight of a little house, an old, deserted dwelling with windows which have been painted over white, and which in the moonlight resemble glass eyes.

He goes into the house and enters a corridor. There is a smell of mold. Everything is old, dirty and dilapidated. Dust and cobwebs in every corner. Perhaps inhabited, perhaps not, very little furniture. An old cupboard, a chair, an umbrella lacking its cover, a greasy hat on a hat rack. In the corridor there is a door with reinforced panes of glass; the corridor leads to a staircase descending to the gloomy depths of a cellar. There is a death-like hush in the house.

NIKOLAS

Is there anybody here?

asks Nikolas in a loud voice.

No answer. The silence seems even deeper after the sound of his own voice. Opposite the staircase a door is standing ajar. Nikolas opens it cautiously. The room he looks into is peculiar in the extreme. It is depressingly untidy and dirty. Collections of eggs, birds and mussel shells, distilling-flasks and glasses of all sizes, dusty and filthy, some spiders under glass cases, a doctor's scales with weights the color of verdigris, books, apothecary's glasses containing leeches and other crawling things. The skeleton of a child. A parrot on its perch. But not a single living human being.

Nikolas goes through a door into another room. As he does so he gets the feeling that there must have been people here quite recently. In the middle of the floor stands a black wooden coffin on two wooden trestles. On the floor wood shavings and bricks; on the window ledge a bowl of dirty water, soap, a brush and a comb; and, standing against the wall, a saw and other carpenter's tools. Nikolas goes through this room in turn. The house's inhospitable atmosphere is beginning to oppress him; he has the feeling that he is not alone, even if the room is empty. He walks on tiptoe, looks all round, and opens and closes the doors cautiously.

The third room is completely empty. Dust is lying so thick that it muffles the sound of his footsteps. Flakes of plaster are lying on the floor; they have peeled off from the wall and ceiling, on which there are rusty stains made by the rain dripping from the leaky roof. In the window there is a potted plant hanging, withered, from its stake.

Facing him a door. This leads into a room with a tiled floor which makes the echo sound harsh and cold. Some large boxes bar his way. Then he suddenly thinks he sees, directly opposite, a long corridor opening out of a wall with no door in it.

When he reaches it, there is no entrance after all, but an uninterrupted wall, into which he has bumped; he lights a cigarette, by the light of which he sees that he is standing close up against a whitewashed wall which is split, cracked and full of mold. He turns round and discovers that he is now in an old laundry room. It has not been used since time immemorial. Everything is covered in dust. On the copper are standing some rusty bird-cages and mousetraps. Old paraffin lamps are lying in a heap on the floor; but what astonishes Nikolas most is a collection of children's clogs standing neatly in rows. They are not quite as dusty as the other things in the old laundry room.

For this reason he goes through the empty room and back to the spot where a door leads out to the staircase. There he stops, and now he hears - in the quivering stillness of the old house - hounds baying and a child weeping. Then a scream, a half-suppressed child's scream, as if a hand had closed over the mouth of the screamer.

It comes from the cellar, but just as Nikolas is about to descend he hears steps on the staircase above. Somebody is coming down. He sees only this person's hand, as it fumbles its way slowly down the handrail. He can only guess at the owner of the hand. The hand continues to glide down, and Nikolas, summoning all his courage, says:

NIKOLAS

Good evening!

But the hand only rises and gestures to him to be quiet. The person stops on the staircase. Not a sound. Then the hand resumes its downward gliding movement. Nikolas realizes that it is the hand of an old man. The figure continues down to the staircase landing, and Nikolas takes a few steps towards him. He sees that it is a slender, elderly man. His hair hangs in tangled wisps. He pokes his head forward in an attentive attitude. He is wearing spectacles, and his face is marked by unctuous servility, coupled with relentless malignity. He looks like a usurer. This man is Marc. At this moment everything about him indicates that he is listening.

NIKOLAS

I...

But Marc interrupts him with a violent movement and bid him be quiet.

MARC

Sh!!!

He continues to the staircase leading down to the cellar, descends two steps and leans over the handrail - we see his neck - and stands there for a long time listening, as he leans towards the depths. Then he comes back up to Nikolas, and his gaze is fixed and tense.

MARC

Did you hear?

NIKOLAS

Yes, the child ...

But now Marc's bearing changes. He looks as if he has woken from the hypnotic

state which his intense interest in the cellar has induced. He suddenly becomes aware that he is facing a stranger. His face clouds over with suspicion.

MARC
(sharply)
The child!

NIKOLAS
Yes.

MARC
There's no child here.

NIKOLAS
But ... the dogs...

During this exchange he has more or less pushed Nikolas before him to the front door, without ever actually touching him. But his intention is clear enough.

MARC
There's no child here, and no dogs either.

NIKOLAS
No?

MARC
No!
(opening the front door)
Good night!

Marc has succeeded in getting rid of Nikolas, and without further comment he shuts the door.

Nikolas stands irresolutely for a moment outside the door, while he reflects on his visit to this extraordinary house. Then he sets off slowly down the road, until at a turn of the road he catches sight of the three disembodied shadows that took their orders in the factory from the blind woman. The group is recognizable by the man with the wooden leg. Nikolas follows the three shadows, feeling instinctively that they will lead him to the man who has asked him for help.

In the house, meanwhile, Marc has turned back to the stairs. From the depths of the cellar he hears steps approaching and the sound of a stick striking the ground; with great servility he greets the blind woman as she comes up the stairs.

Marc follows her with exaggerated and ill-placed attentiveness. He opens for her the door into the consulting-room, and closes it behind her. The blind woman continues on her way without taking any notice of him. Her head is tilted back slightly, as is often done by blind people. She moves forward, cold and unbending. As she crosses the consulting-room, she is on the point of stumbling over a large box lying open on the floor. Marc kicks it hurriedly aside and draws up a chair for her at the table. She ignores him completely. When she sits down, he takes her stick and puts it carefully on the table. Marc stands motionless and expectant. Then she slowly takes a

medicine bottle from her pocket. With her bony hand she holds it out to Marc. When he takes it she raises her face towards him for the first time. He looks at her; they appear to exchange a conspiratorial glance: an order is given and received.

At this moment an explosion of laughter is heard from the parrot. Marc tears off his spectacles - which rest a little way down his nose - polishes them and gives the parrot a near-sighted, malicious and knowing look. Then he goes to a shelf on which he places the medicine bottle with the poison label.

We go from the sinister house to a neighboring castle. A shot of the road, where we see Nikolas on his way to the castle.

The camera moves to a certain window on the ground floor of the castle, behind which we see a man getting up and taking a lamp. This is the man who, at the inn, visited Nikolas in a dream. We can call him Bernard. He leaves the room.

THE INTERIOR OF THE CASTLE

Bernard enters a room arranged as a sick-room. A woman is lying there in bed; it is his daughter, whose name is Léone. A nurse is looking after her. Léone is a woman of twenty-six. She is very pale, as if suffering from anemia. Bernard goes up to the bed. The nurse stands beside him and says:

NURSE

The wounds are nearly healed!

Bernard holds the lamp so that the light falls on Léone's throat. In the middle of her throat, where the jugular vein shows blue under the white skin, we see two small marks, reminiscent of those that appear after a cat- or rat-bite. There have been two wounds, but they are now closing and healing. Bernard prepares to go. He turns in the door, because Léone has stirred. She moves her lips as if in a horrible dream, and her face takes on an expression of terror. She stammers out:

LÉONE

The blood! ... The blood! ...

Then she seems to calm down. Bernard goes back to the bed. Léone opens her eyes, recognizes her father, gives him a feeble smile and takes his hand. Bernard looks at her with intensely serious eyes. It is evident that even if he does not know the cause of her condition, he has his suspicions about it. He takes a last look at his daughter and goes. In the door he turns to the nurse.

BERNARD

You mustn't lie down and go to sleep until the doctor has been here!

The nurse promises not to do so. As he closes the door, Léone moves again. The nurse watches her closely.

THE CASTLE

Léone's sick-room. The nurse puts a chair by the bed.

THE PARK OF THE CASTLE

Nikolas jumps up on the wall ringing the castle. When he appears on the wall,

his body forms a ghostly silhouette against the night sky (to suggest the shadows he is pursuing).

THE COURTYARD

The three shadows emerge from the shadow of the trees, steal across the moonlit courtyard and disappear into the deep shadows of the castle.

THE CASTLE

Bernard in the corridor, outside the door of his room. He still has the lamp in his hand. He goes into his room.

THE COURTYARD

Enter Nikolas (from another direction than the three shadows we saw in an earlier shot). He finds himself under the room that Bernard has just entered. Through the lighted window he sees Bernard putting down his lamp and recognizes him as the man who visited him in his dreams. At the same moment he sees the three shadows going diagonally across the ceiling of the room; at that moment Bernard leaves the window and goes across to a bookshelf. Nikolas rushes to the main door of the castle. He rings vigorously at the door. The bell gives a feeble ring. The echo dies away, and everything is quiet again. Nikolas rings again. Now he hears behind the door an old person's shuffling steps. He tugs at the door and shouts:

NIKOLAS

Open up ... open up quickly ... hurry!

The door remains closed, but inside he hears

A VOICE

Who is it?

NIKOLAS

For God's sake ... hurry .. . they're killing him!

Then the door opens, but only a few inches. Through the chink we see old Joseph, a faithful manservant. He is wearing only trousers and a shirt, which is open at the neck. His braces are hanging down his back. He is carrying a lamp in his hand. The manservant wants to know more, but at this very moment a long-drawn-out scream is heard, hideous and horrifying. For a moment this scream seems to paralyze the two men. The manservant puts his hand to his mouth in order not to scream himself. Mechanically he opens the door wide. The two men rush into the house.

THE STAIRCASE LANDING OUTSIDE LÉONE'S ROOM

The nurse opens the door in terror. Her facial contortions show that the invalid has heard nothing, but that on the other hand she dare not leave her either.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

This adjoins Bernard's room. The manservant and Nikolas try to open the door into Bernard's room, but the body of the dying man is lying just behind the door, preventing them from opening it more than a few inches. The dying man's screams fill them with horror.

MANSERVANT

The other door!

He gives Nikolas the lamp and hurries out to the other entrance to the room containing the dying man. When the manservant goes into the room, he finds his master slumped up against the door, with one hand still clutching the door handle convulsively, as if trying to escape the lethal weapon which has struck him just as he reached the door. His screams give way to gasps, and he has difficulty in breathing. Nikolas has put the lamp on the piece of furniture nearest the door. Now he comes up, and at a sign from the manservant makes the murdered man release his grip on the door handle. The dying man tries desperately to open his eyes and speak. Then it grows quiet, and in the silence only his labored breathing can be heard. Suddenly he gives a deep sigh, at the same time opening his eyes and looking frantically around. He looks up at Nikolas. An expression of surprise lights up his face for a moment. The manservant has intercepted this look and glances curiously at Nikolas. But the dying man's stare again becomes fixed and glassy. He stammers:

BERNARD

Water!

Nikolas gets up; on a table he finds a tray with cups and a jug of linden tea. He pours out a little tea in a cup, which he lowers to the dying man. With a teaspoon he moistens the dying man's lips.

While Nikolas has been occupied with the tray, an old serving woman has arrived at the door connecting the death-room with the drawing-room. It is the housekeeper of the castle, the wife of the old manservant; they tell her to come in by the other door. She enters with the chamber-maid. The old housekeeper moves her hands incessantly under her motley apron.

On the staircase landing the nurse is still standing, terror-stricken, outside the open door of Léone's room, listening and staring out into the darkness. Then Gisèle appears, wearing an apron-like dress, the sleeves of which are gathered in a tight band round her wrists. A very simple and slightly old-fashioned dress, which can easily be turned into a kimono. She thinks the scream has come from the sick-room, and is surprised to find the nurse on the stairs.

GISÈLE

Wasn't it her?

NURSE

No, it's down there.

The nurse listens for sounds in Léone's room, while Gisèle runs down the stairs.

BERNARD'S ROOM

Enter Gisèle. She stops dead by the door, paralyzed by the sight of her father lying on the point of death. She looks at the chamber-maid and the old housekeeper, who are clinging to each other, while the tears run down their cheeks. Beside herself, and with eyes dilated with terror, she goes to her father and kneels by his side. He understands that she is there. His face lights up for a moment, after which he closes his eyes again for a while, as if trying to draw breath for the few words he wants to say; but he has not sufficient strength left. He uses his last ounce of strength to draw a ring from his finger. He hands the ring to Gisèle, who recognizes it. It is a

signet ring, the signet of which is formed like a tiny gold cross. She holds it in the hollow of her hand, while her eyes fill with tears. The dying man catches Gisèle's eye and, as it were, guides it over to Nikolas as if to say: 'This man will protect you.' His gaze becomes vacant, without consciousness, fixed and glassy. His breathing comes in jerks. Nikolas tries to moisten his lips but the liquid runs down his chin and thence onto his breast. His teeth are firmly clenched, and the corners of his mouth are sagging. The brief death-struggle has begun. While we see the little group by the door, which has been joined by the old coachman, we hear the dying man's death-rattle. Tears run down the coachman's furrowed cheeks.

ON THE LANDING

The nurse is still standing there. The death-rattle reaches her ears. She goes into Léone's room and shuts the door behind her.

BERNARD'S ROOM

Here the silence of death prevails. The group by the door follows with bated breath the last spasms of the death-struggle. Now the murdered lord of the castle is drawing his last gasp. The old housekeeper goes up to Gisèle, who is no longer weeping but merely stares uncomprehendingly at her father's lifeless body. The old housekeeper calls to her gently. Gisèle looks at her in surprise.

GISÈLE

Is he dead?

The old woman nods. Gisèle looks once more at her father's face, then bursts into tears and without offering any resistance lets herself be led across to the wall, where she collapses into a chair, throwing her arms round the old woman and clinging to her hand. She says nothing. She only weeps and weeps. The coachman goes out.

Nikolas and the manservant carry the dead man across to a sofa. While the manservant is still in the room, Nikolas goes up to Gisèle. He helps the maid to lead Gisèle away. The latter is led out unresisting. He takes her by the arm. She hides her face in her hands and weeps heart-rendingly. The manservant remains in the room. He walks round in a curiously restless way; he makes a number of unconscious movements with his hands, as if wanting to make somebody or other keep quiet.

THE COURTYARD

The coachman crosses the courtyard, opens the door of the carriage entrance, and draws out a hunting carriage. He pulls it slowly and carefully, as if wanting to muffle the sound.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

The old housekeeper has gone on ahead in order to light a lamp. Nikolas gets Gisèle to sit down. Her gaze is vacant, and the only sound that comes from her is a suppressed sobbing.

Nikolas walks to and fro in this ante-chamber of death, deeply disturbed by the scene he has just witnessed. As he reaches the door, the old housekeeper is standing in front of him.

HOUSEKEEPER

(in a low voice)

Couldn't you stay here ... until ...

Nikolas replies with a movement of his head, then continues to pace the floor.

THE COURTYARD

The coachman leads a horse from the stable.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Nikolas stops in front of Gisèle's chair and looks compassionately at her. She is sitting as motionless as a stone. Only her lips are trembling, as if she is praying quietly. Suddenly she senses his presence. She looks up at him imploringly and says in a voice choked with tears:

GISÈLE

It's so dark here!

He takes out some matches and lights the lamps on an old piano, which is covered with a faded green silk cloth. The only sound is the monotonous tick-tock of an old clock, which suggests the dull beating of an almost exhausted heart.

THE COURTYARD

The coachman is hitching the horses.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Nikolas lights another lamp, and as he puts out the match he looks at Gisèle. She is sitting with her hands in her lap, rocking her head backwards and forwards. Her eyes are glazed. She is doing all she can to prevent herself from breaking down completely, but when the first tears trickle down her cheeks she breaks into sobs. She lifts her clenched hands to her eyes and weeps. Nikolas goes over to her. He knows that he can do absolutely nothing, however much he wants to quench her sorrow. He bends over her, as if wanting to speak the words of consolation that she needs, but before he can say anything she bursts out:

GISÈLE

How can anyone endure to live here?

Nikolas strokes her hair and goes to the window, from which he sees

THE COURTYARD

The coachman is putting on his cloak; he sits up and drives the carriage out.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Gisèle jumps up at the sound of the carriage. In her anxious and overwrought condition she endows every sound with meaning. She goes to the window, looks out and asks:

GISÈLE

Where is he going?

NIKOLAS

To fetch the police!

answers Nikolas.

The sound of the carriage dies away, but Gisèle remains standing with her

face pressed against the window pane. Nikolas goes to a lamp, by the light of which he takes out the sealed parcel that the stranger gave him in the inn, breaks the seal and finds a book. Nikolas tiptoes over to a chair, lifts it carefully, turns it towards the lamplight, and sits down without a sound. Sitting there, he begins to read the book from the beginning.

LÉONE'S ROOM

Léone is lying in bed. The nurse is sitting in the room with her sewing things. Suddenly she raises her eyes. A number of little furrows have appeared on Léone's forehead. Her breathing becomes irregular and labored. Her face is twisted, as if she is tormented by fear and uncertainty. She opens her eyes, and her gaze is fixed and distant, as if held by someone a long way away. She looks like a medium under hypnosis. She is visibly no longer master of her own will, or she is under the influence of a power stronger than her own. In spite of her weakened condition she raises herself on her elbow and shouts very loudly:

LÉONE

Yes ... yes!

as if someone has called to her. The nurse has put aside her sewing things and is throwing off the blanket in which she has wrapped herself for the night. Outside the dog howls - penetrating, long-drawn-out howls. Léone raises herself still further until she is sitting on the edge of the bed.

LÉONE

Yes ... I'm coming!

The nurse hurries over to her, but Léone, who moves just like somebody hypnotized, is on her way to the door. The nurse blocks her path by pushing a chair in front of her. The nurse stands before her and stares hard at her to catch her eye. The chair prevents Léone from advancing. The nurse tries gently to wake her, as one talks to a child crying in its sleep.

NURSE

You're dreaming ... you're dreaming!

Now a remarkable change comes over Léone; her tense expression relaxes. The hypnotic suggestion gradually seems to lose its hold on her, as if the other party has suddenly reconsidered and decided to wait for a better opportunity. She returns to her normal state of mind. She looks in surprise at the nurse, who leads her gently back to bed. Léone offers no resistance and even cooperates actively in getting into bed. The nurse sits down beside her.

NURSE

What were you dreaming about?

LÉONE

A voice ...

NURSE

That spoke to you?

LÉONE

That called ... commanded ...

NURSE

What did it say?

Léone makes no reply.

Her eyelids close again. To all appearances she is sleeping the deep, sound sleep of an over-tired child. The nurse watches her anxiously. This peaceful and apparently quite normal sleep inspires her with fear rather than confidence. She goes into the adjoining room to rinse some medicine bottles and the like. At almost the same moment Léone wakes up with a start. She listens intently for the previous distant call; without a word she hurriedly throws off the blanket and steals out - so quietly that the nurse suspects nothing.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Gisèle at the window with her forehead pressed against the cold pane. Nikolas is sitting reading the book.

Gisèle suddenly raises her head and looks out in the park.

GISÈLE

Léone ...

Nikolas looks up.

GISÈLE

Look! ... Look! ... There, in the park!

Nikolas hurries over to the window. The next moment they rush out into the hall; here they are joined by the manservant and the nurse, who come down the stairs in great agitation.

NIKOLAS

Take the lantern!

He points to the lantern which the coachman has left at the foot of the stairs. The manservant's wife, the old housekeeper, comes in with her husband's jacket. He hastily puts it on. Then they all hurry out to

THE PARK

By the time they are out there, Léone is nowhere to be seen. They begin a thorough search of the park, which looks ghostly with its moonlit sandstone statues. Some of the tree trunks are painted white. They look like skeletons, swaying backwards and forwards. Spiders' webs shine like silver. From time to time a bird flies off in alarm. We begin by following the manservant, as he makes his way through bushes and undergrowth with the lantern held high over his head like a luminous hour-glass. With his free hand he holds his jacket tightly round his neck. In the distance we hear Gisèle shouting anxiously:

GISÈLE

Léone! ... Léone!

We see the old housekeeper standing on the stairs and looking out into the park. Gisèle's cries can still be heard. Now we follow Nikolas and Gisèle, who are together. Suddenly Nikolas stops and calls to Gisèle. He points out a group at some distance from them. On a stone table covered with ivy a white figure is lying prostrate. Bending over her a dark shape can be dimly discerned - as far as can be judged, that of an old woman. The white figure

is lying in such a way that its head hangs over the edge of the table, and the attitude of the dark figure suggests that its lips must be in contact with the prostrate woman's throat.

Nikolas and Gisèle, terror-stricken, make for the spot. Now the dark figure appears to notice them. Like a dog when it is disturbed, the figure turns its head irritably and stares at the newcomers with the dead eyes of a blind person. With a grimace resembling nothing so much as a snarl, it bends down again over Léone, but straightens up once more as if abandoning its plan, and just as it looks as if it will turn away and go it dissolves into thin air. Nikolas and Gisèle have reached the stone table. It is indeed Léone. Gisèle is already at her side. She looks in perplexity at Léone's thrown-back head. There is a gentle expression on Léone's lips, which are parted in a peaceful smile. Her hands are hanging down, white and limp. She looks in every respect as if she is dead. Nikolas puts his ear to her mouth to listen to her breathing ... which is very weak ... Gisèle cups Léone's face carefully in her hands and turns it towards her.

GISÈLE

Léone! Léone!

Léone slowly opens her eyes and looks for a long time in astonishment at Gisèle, who says in a disappointed, imploring voice:

GISÈLE

But it's me ... Gisèle!

Léone's eyelids close again. Only a narrow strip of white can be seen between the closed eyelids. Gisèle shows signs of wanting to call Léone back to consciousness.

NIKOLAS

Don't wake her!

At the same moment the manservant comes up, and Nikolas takes the lantern from his hand, letting the light fall on Léone's face.

GISÈLE

Look ... blood! ...

And she points at Léone's throat. The manservant opens his eyes wide and leans forward to look. Then he takes Léone in his arms, as if she was a child, and carries her to the castle. At the entrance the housekeeper is waiting. The nurse brings her a shawl or blanket; the housekeeper runs to meet the group and wraps Léone in the blanket. The little procession is now approaching the house. Nikolas runs on ahead to open the double door. The nurse goes up to the sick-room, shuts the windows and arranges the bed. Meanwhile the manservant carries Léone up the stairs. Gisèle follows behind. Nikolas shuts the double door, goes into the drawing-room and continues his reading of the diary. His jaw is set in determination. A page of the book is shown.

LÉONE'S ROOM

The manservant has laid Léone on the bed and now goes out. The nurse settles Léone and discovers the wound in her throat; she takes a wad of cotton-wool, moistens it with a disinfectant rinse from a bottle, and dabs the liquid on the wound. Léone shudders convulsively, puts her hand on the wound and

groans. The nurse goes out.

 GISÈLE
 (calling softly)
Léone! ... Léone ...

Léone wakes up, but seems not to recognize Gisèle. She looks at her sister as if she has just woken from an evil and hideous dream. Then suddenly she seems to realize where she is. She shivers, puts her transparent hands to her face and weeps silently.

 GISÈLE
 (bending over her)
Why are you crying?

Léone continues weeping for a little; then she says:

 LÉONE
I wish I was dead!

 GISÈLE
No, no ... Léone!

 LÉONE
 (still weeping behind
 her white hands)
Yes, yes, yes ... I am lost ... I am sinking
deeper and deeper into the darkness ... I am
afraid ... I am afraid! ...

Gisèle gives her a comforting pat on the arm. Léone takes her hands from her face. The nurse returns. Léone glances round the room, as if looking for somebody.

 LÉONE
Where is ... ?

Gisèle hardly knows how to answer; she looks enquiringly at the nurse, who asks:

 NURSE
Your father?

 LÉONE
Yes!

 NURSE
The master ... is asleep!

Léone smiles, gives a sigh of contentment and closes her eyes. She sighs again with relief and lies peacefully for a moment with closed eyes. Then a remarkable transformation occurs. A deathly pallor spreads across her face. Her breathing becomes more rapid. Her mouth opens. Her lips tighten. Then she opens her eyes. They are now hard, almost malevolent. Her face takes on an expression of lust when she sees Gisèle. The latter shrinks away uncomprehendingly, seized with fear and pain. The nurse gives her to understand that she had better go.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Nikolas is there with the old housekeeper, who with old-world courtesy brings him a cup of strong coffee. Just as she is handing Nikolas the cup, Gisèle comes in. With a distracted expression she shuts the door mechanically and goes and sits down. The old housekeeper puts the other cup down beside Gisèle, who is completely absorbed by her recent strange experience. The other two look at her enquiringly.

GISÈLE

(back in the present)

I think Léone is dying!

The old housekeeper goes. Gisèle shakes her head like somebody trying to get to the bottom of an insoluble mystery. Nikolas takes the cup and puts it in her hand. Mechanically she takes a gulp and puts the cup down; then she gives a sudden start, as if she has heard a piercing death-scream. She sits for a moment with her mouth agape and her eyes wide open. Then she stands up, rushes to the window and looks out. She seems surprised at not seeing anything and turns towards Nikolas.

GISÈLE

Didn't you hear something?

Nikolas shakes his head, goes up to her and forces her to sit down on a chair; but she cannot refrain from turning towards the window.

NIKOLAS

You're tired!

He glances at her and turns back to his cup of coffee, which he put down a moment ago. Now he puts it very carefully on the table. An oppressive silence has settled over the house.

GISÈLE

Oh, the silence!

She presses her extended fingers against her breast, as if trying to free it from the pressure of the silence. Nikolas watches her for a little. Then he goes to the piano and begins to play. At the first touch she rises, goes slowly across the room and stands behind him. She stands there with her hands behind her back, until the music finishes. Then she says very quietly:

GISÈLE

Thank you!

A moment later she adds:

GISÈLE

I'll try to get a little sleep!

She takes a few steps, turns and says:

GISÈLE

You're not leaving us, I hope?

Nikolas rises and goes close up to her. She looks into his eyes like a

trusting child. He gazes at her with infinite tenderness. Then he bends down and kisses her impulsively on the forehead. She gives him a smile of gratitude and goes into the adjoining room, where she lies down on the sofa and draws up a blanket over her. Nikolas stands gazing after her. A tear trickles from the corner of his eye down his cheek. From the other room he hears her voice:

GISELE

Play something more!

He turns back to the piano and plays the same tune again. Gisèle's eyelids close. She sleeps.

As the last notes die away, the old manservant enters the drawing-room. Nikolas hastily turns towards him and puts his finger to his lips as a warning not to make any noise. The manservant says quietly:

MANSERVANT

The police are here.

Outside can be heard faintly the noise of a carriage rumbling over the cobbles in the courtyard. Nikolas leaves the room, together with the manservant.

THE COURTYARD

The two men emerge from the house and stand at the head of the steps. The carriage drives up the last few yards. The horse walks as if sunk in its own thoughts; then it stops abruptly. Joseph takes the lantern, which has been left on the steps, and slowly approaches the carriage. After a few paces he stops. Now he can see the whole carriage clearly and the coachman is alone.

MANSERVANT

Are you alone?

No answer! He takes a few more steps and repeats his question:

MANSERVANT

Are you alone?

Still no answer. Joseph turns to Nikolas, who in the meantime has come nearer. They look more closely at the coachman, who is sitting in a curious position with his legs stretched out stiffly against the dashboard of the carriage. He has the reins in his hand, but they are hanging loose. Joseph goes still nearer to the carriage and lifts the lantern. The coachman is sitting as if asleep. Nikolas clambers up behind the coachman's seat. Joseph hands him the lantern, which he holds in front of the coachman's face. He sees two staring, glassy eyes. Half-paralyzed with terror, Nikolas hands the lantern back to Joseph. In the hope that the coachman is merely asleep, Nikolas puts his hand on his shoulder to waken him. But at the first touch the coachman's head sinks on his breast, and his whole body slumps forward.

Meanwhile the manservant has placed the lantern on the ground, and as soon as Nikolas has got down from the carriage the manservant draws his attention to blood dripping from the floor of the carriage - drip! drip!

Both men stand for a moment as if hypnotized by this fearful new discovery. Then Nikolas hurries into the house. During all this the other servants have

gathered round the carriage. They shudder at the sight of the dead coachman and stare at the horse, which - with a corpse at the reins - has found its way home unaided. Joseph gets up onto the carriage ...

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Enter Nikolas. He shuts the door very quietly behind him as if afraid that by making the slightest noise he will bring about still worse misfortunes. He tiptoes to the piano and extinguishes the two lights on it. As he is doing this, he cocks an ear to listen for Gisèle's breathing; then he resumes his reading of the diary, a page of which is shown. As he reads we hear in the distance the sound of horses' hooves on the paving stones ... also the sound of the carriage being put away. Then silence reigns again around the old house. Nikolas listens out into the silence. Is he awake, or are all these fearful happenings merely a long, horrible nightmare? The heart of the old clock is still beating. After a moment a deep sigh is heard from a corner of the room. Nikolas looks in that direction. A cello is standing there. One of the strings has slipped, and as he looks at it another string breaks. Then silence again wraps its mantle round the room.

Nikolas begins reading again, but now the hideous, piercing screech of the doorbell is heard throughout the house. Nikolas puts down his book, goes to the window and looks out. There he sees a man, who turns his back on him. Joseph comes running from the stable buildings. Nikolas gathers that the stranger must be the doctor, for he and Joseph start discussing Léone's condition.

DOCTOR

How is she?

Joseph explains to him that things are going rather badly. The young lady has been found in the park. In answer to the doctor's exclamation of surprise Joseph explains that she has climbed out of a window.

DOCTOR

Was she alone, then?

MANSERVANT

Yes, just for a moment.

Meanwhile the doctor has come in, followed by the manservant, who is carrying his bag for him. When the doctor enters the ante-room, Nikolas opens the door. The stranger, who has hung up his hat, turns round. It is Marc, whom Nikolas met in the little house behind the factory. They look hard at each other for a moment.

NIKOLAS

Good evening!

DOCTOR [MARC]

Good evening!

answers the doctor, and it is he who eases the tension of the situation by saying to the manservant:

DOCTOR

Let's go try ... it's high time ...

The doctor hurries to get in front of the manservant. As soon as his back is turned, Nikolas goes up to the manservant and makes him understand that he is to go in to Gisèle. The manservant goes into the drawing-room. Nikolas runs up the stairs behind the doctor.

THE SICK-ROOM

The doctor hurries in and goes straight to the bed. The nurse's face takes on an expression of fear. She is giving the patient camphor. Léone is paler than before. Her features are hard and sharp, her lips blue. It is painful to see her and hear her breathing. Beside herself, the nurse turns to the doctor and says:

NURSE

It's going very badly!

DOCTOR

(curtly)

Her pulse?

NURSE

Very weak!

The doctor lifts the patient's eyelids, then examines her lips and gums. Next he takes Léone's wrist to feel her pulse. As he does so, he glances towards the door, where Nikolas is standing. An expression of surprise passes across the doctor's face; then he smiles the most fleeting of smiles. He lets go of Léone's hand and looks closely at her face. The nurse, who has been following his slightest movement, asks anxiously:

NURSE

Is she dying?

DOCTOR

(seriously)

Yes.

He takes a few steps away from the bed and seems to fall into deep thought then he says, as if talking to himself:

DOCTOR

Perhaps we could save her ...

Nikolas and the nurse follow him with their eyes. He speaks as if adding a link to the chain of thought he is forging for himself.

DOCTOR

Will you give her blood?

The question is addressed to Nikolas. He looks across at Léone. He feels certain the doctor is right, and if he does not immediately declare himself willing, it is because his feelings are divided between the obvious need to save Léone and his fear and uncertainty about this man. He looks at the nurse. Her anxiety has disappeared, and a gleam of confidence and hope shines in her eyes.

The doctor comes a step nearer and says, emphasizing each word:

DOCTOR

Immediately ... this very moment!

Nikolas makes no reply. He almost fails to notice the nurse, whose face reflects disappointment and sorrow. The doctor looks at him for a moment, then turns away and shrugs his shoulders.

Nikolas straightens up, takes off his coat, and rolls up one of his shirt sleeves. The nurse gets up with a happy smile and crosses to the table on which are bottles and instruments. The doctor, however, closes the door behind Nikolas, who has the feeling that he has let himself be caught in a trap.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Joseph goes to the door of the room where Gisèle is. His face shows surprise when he discovers Gisèle on the sofa; she is sitting motionless, with her legs drawn up under her and her head leaning back against the wall, staring fixedly at him with wide-open, startled eyes. As if talking to herself, she says:

GISÈLE

Why does the doctor always come at night?

The manservant goes up to her in order to calm her.

THE SICK-ROOM

By the time we return there, all the preparations for the blood transfusion are completed.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Joseph returns from the room where Gisèle is. He has evidently succeeded in calming her. He goes and sits in the chair where Nikolas sat. He rests his head in his hand. He sees the open diary and begins reading it.

THE SICK-ROOM

The blood transfusion is now in progress. The only words are curt orders like: 'Now! - Quickly! - That's enough! - Give it to me! - Sit still!' etc.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Joseph is reading the diary, which arouses his interest more and more. It is as if he finds a connection between what he reads and the fearful events that have taken place around him. An extract from the diary is shown.

THE SICK-ROOM

The blood transfusion continues. Marc has positioned himself outside the circle of light from the lamp, so that he can see Nikolas in bright light, while he himself sits in the dark. Nikolas watches Léone's face anxiously and closely during her struggle with death. Life slowly seems to return to her, and her breathing becomes more peaceful. She opens her eyes and looks at the people round her, but she is much too enfeebled to speak, and closes her eyes again. Marc keeps a close watch on Nikolas, who grows paler and paler. His eyes swivel slowly from Nikolas to the patient and back to Nikolas again.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Another fragment of the diary is shown [having to do with vampires].

THE SICK-ROOM

The blood transfusion is completed. While Marc himself is looking after the patient, the nurse leads Nikolas into an adjoining room, where she makes him sit down and prepares his bandage. The doctor stands bending over Léone.

DOCTOR

Is he in a bad way?

NURSE

(as she bandages Nikolas)

Yes, rather.

DOCTOR

Give him a tablet!

The nurse brings a tablet which she gives to Nikolas with a glass of water. He puts the glass down on a table near him. Then she covers him up, puts out the lamp and goes into the sick-room, the door of which is ajar, leaving a strip of light visible. Meanwhile the nurse has been moving about, putting Léone's room straight. The doctor looks at her for a moment; then he says:

DOCTOR

You can lie down now and sleep. I'll keep watch!

The nurse continues working with great zeal. The doctor now says to her in a cutting, almost hissing, tone:

DOCTOR

Did you hear what I said?

The nurse looks at him in astonishment and encounters a cold stare. She realizes that there is no use in protesting; it would be in vain. She puts aside what she has in her hands, and goes off. The doctor closes the door after her and looks round the room.

In the adjoining room Nikolas has dozed off. He feels very weak. In this weakened condition he feels as if he is fainting, which is curious, because at one and the same time he is both fully conscious and far away. Suddenly he wakes from his doze and stares, open-mouthed, at his bandaged arm. The blood can be seen seeping through the bandage. The wound is throbbing.

NIKOLAS

Doctor, doctor!

From the next room can be heard the doctor's cold, biting voice:

DOCTOR

What is it?

NIKOLAS

The wound is bleeding!

DOCTOR

Go to sleep!

Nikolas lets his arm fall into the same position as before, dangling over the arm of the chair. In his semi-conscious state he hears the doctor's voice, which has taken on quite a different tone; he whispers seductively and

reassuringly, as if trying to convince a child and overcome its resistance by means of gentleness - or as one talks to somebody one wants to hypnotize. In his drowsy condition Nikolas hears only a few isolated words of this monologue, which in its entirety sounds something like this:

DOCTOR

You are suffering ... you are tired ... come with me ... we shall become one ... bodies, souls, blood ... there is only one way of escaping from your suffering and finding peace ... follow me ... you will not be freed until you have taken your own life ... come ... I am waiting for you ...

Then everything is quiet. In the silence Nikolas hears a sound: drip, drip! He leans forward and looks down. On the floor he sees the lantern - which Joseph was carrying when the coachman arrived, apparently dead. The sound of dripping comes from somewhere near the lantern ... and now he sees what it is: blood running from his wound down onto his fingers and thence to the floor, where a regular pool has already formed. With an expression of bewilderment he looks towards the door into the sick-room and calls:

NIKOLAS

Doctor!

Again the doctor answers in an ice-cold, hissing voice:

DOCTOR

What is it now?

NIKOLAS

(desperately)

I'm losing my blood!

DOCTOR

You're losing your blood?

NIKOLAS

(urgently)

Yes!

DOCTOR

(slowly and emphatically)

Nonsense! ... It's here! ... Your blood ...

Nikolas sits there for a moment - uncomprehending and irresolute then he leans forward and looks down. The sound of dripping has ceased, the pool of blood and the lantern have disappeared. When he lifts his hand he sees that it is completely white, and that the bandage is in order. With a weary smile he settles himself comfortably in the easy chair. He both sees and does not see the light behind the door of the sick-room moving away and disappearing.

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Here the old manservant is sitting, completely absorbed in the diary. Suddenly he raises his head, as if he has heard a sound. He starts to his feet, with an overwhelming sense of dread and foreboding. He is filled with a presentiment of some horror or other. He goes to the window and sees on the

paving stones the shadow of a window on the first floor. There is a light behind the window and the light is moving. He goes cautiously into the hall. When he has climbed a few steps of the staircase he can see Marc in the window. In his hand he is holding a lamp which he moves backwards and forwards several times. The manservant stands there motionless and with bated breath ...

A remarkable change is taking place in Nikolas. His lips open. His breathing becomes more rapid. He is apparently in the throes of a sort of paroxysm, as if some stranger's will is trying to gain control over him.

Now Nikolas wakes with a start, filled with terror, depression, anxiety and despondency. He looks up. The manservant is standing at his side with the glass of water that the nurse brought for him earlier, when he was on the point of fainting. At the same moment he realizes what has happened: it was his own blood that spoke to him in his dream, which is therefore nothing but a horrible mirror-image of what has occurred at Léone's bedside. He pushes the glass of water away, and makes his way past the manservant to the sick-room, which is almost completely dark, being lit only by a single small nightlight. He tears the door open.

On entering, he sees Marc coming from the door leading out to the stairs. When he sees Nikolas, Marc's expression becomes hard and malevolent, and he increases his pace. Nikolas, however, reaches the bed first. He turns ice-cold with horror at the sight of Léone. She is lying there almost lifeless. She is whiter even than the bed-linen covering her. Her face is heavy with sleep and relaxed, as if from the caress of a gentle hand. The little medicine bottle with the poison label, which we recognize from earlier scenes, is held in her hand, and with her last remaining strength she is trying to raise it to her mouth. At the very moment when the bottle touches her lips, Nikolas succeeds in snatching it from her. He throws it into a corner of the room, where it smashes. Then he hurries to Léone, and uses his handkerchief to wipe a drop of poison from her lips.

Somewhere in the house a crash is heard, as if somebody has slammed the main door violently to, then another crash, but less violent than before. The manservant seizes Nikolas involuntarily by the arm.

MANSERVANT

Stay here!

And he hurries out of the room. From the staircase landing he sees a light at the foot of the stairs. The light is whirling round. The shadow of the handrail flickers nervously on the wall. Nikolas is seized by a new fear: he is uneasy about Gisèle and hurries down. The nurse, who has been woken by the noise, darts into Léone's room. Nikolas rushes through the drawing-room into Gisèle's room. She is not there. He listens for her breathing, but not a sound reaches him. He lights a match. Her bed is empty. The blanket has been thrown back. He hurriedly searches the adjoining rooms, which are lying in darkness behind closed shutters, and returns to the hall.

From the moment he set off down the stairs, a penetrating, continuous howling has been audible outside. He goes to the door, under which at the same moment a white paper appears. He picks it up and reads the inscription: 'Dust thou art, unto dust thou shalt return.' He opens the door just quickly enough to see the shadow of the man with the wooden leg moving off the white paving stones of the courtyard and disappearing into the shadows of the trees.

Nikolas hurries off in the same direction.

LÉONE'S ROOM

The nurse stands leaning over Léone. It is evident that the patient's strength is ebbing away. The nurse and the manservant are aware that everything will soon be over. Léone realizes it herself. She moans, sobs and wails. The nurse consoles her as best she can. As for the manservant, he appears to be maturing in his mind some great project or other. Léone, who has great difficulty in getting the words out, says:

LÉONE

I am damned ... oh God, oh my God!

The manservant's mouth is twitching, which shows clearly that he is faced with an important decision, and he gives a deep sigh, like a man who knows that he is playing with life and death. Then he calls the nurse over to the door and says:

MANSERVANT

She must not die now ... you must keep her
alive until morning comes ...

The nurse nods. Then the manservant goes. On the threshold he stops.

MANSERVANT

God help me!

He makes the sign of the cross and goes. The nurse returns to Léone's bed. She puts her hands up to her face, presses her fingers hard against her eyes and sobs quietly.

THE WOOD

Nikolas is running in the direction of the factory.

THE CASTLE

The manservant comes pushing a wheelbarrow and stops in front of a tool-shed, from which by the light of a lantern he takes a pick-axe and a shovel; he puts these in the wheelbarrow. He is just about to go when he realizes that he has forgotten something. He goes back into the shed and takes a long crowbar and a wooden mallet. These objects likewise he puts in the wheelbarrow, fastens the lantern on the handle of the wheelbarrow, and sets off.

A FIELD

Nikolas enters at a run and suddenly falls headlong.

OUTSIDE THE CHURCHYARD

The manservant pushes his wheelbarrow along the wall. He makes for the churchyard gate.

A FIELD

Nikolas is lying on the spot where he fell. Suddenly his body divides in two. One part (his 'ego') remains lying unconscious, while the other (his dream) gets up with evident difficulty. He slowly comes to and looks round in amazement. Not far off he notices an object on the ground. It is Gisèle's ring - the ring with the cross which her father gave her. He picks it up and examines it carefully, as if Gisèle has sent him a message by means of the

ring; he looks round in the hope of finding a clue which direction to go in order to find her again. Then he discovers some footsteps in the sandy earth, looking as if they have just been made before his very eyes by a pair of invisible feet - Gisèle's feet. He gets up and follows these footsteps. They lead him to

THE BLIND WOMAN'S HOUSE

He goes in at the door, which opens easily, and finds himself in a dark yard at the back of the house. He gropes his way forward in the shadow of the house, until he finds a door without a handle. He opens this in turn. He now finds himself in the old laundry room, which he recognizes from his previous visit. From here he knows the way into the house and goes straight to the door at the other end of the laundry room. He enters the empty room adjoining it. Here everything is as he last saw it. His own footsteps are clearly visible in the dust on the floor; nobody has been here. He listens. Not a sound in the house. He looks for the door into the room where the coffin stood before. It is locked. So something has happened since his last visit. He tries hard to open the door, but in vain.

He must and shall continue! From the staircase landing he discovers that the door into the consulting-room is open. The moon throws a white beam on the stairs.

Is there someone in there? He steals along on tiptoe, holding on to the handrail, and reaches a point from which he can see most of the room. Inch by inch his view of the room increases, but there is nobody to be seen. On the other hand a large box or something of the kind is standing in the middle of the floor. It is covered by a white cloth. He goes into the room. The door into the adjoining room is open. It was there that he saw the coffin before - and this must be the coffin - surely it must be the coffin under the white cloth. He goes up to it. The cloth is draped over somebody lying in the open coffin. The lid is leaning up against the wall. Merciful God! Gisèle! What has happened? Has he come too late! He looks again at the lid of the coffin standing by the wall. Something is painted on it in large capital letters. He reads: 'Dust thou art, unto dust thou shalt return.'

So these words were intended for her, not for him. He must make certain; he goes back to the coffin and carefully draws aside the cloth covering the corpse's face. But it is not Gisèle that he sees. It is his own face, rigid and open-eyed; his own head that rests wax-pale on the shavings in the black coffin. In bewilderment he bends over his own corpse. How can this be! What can it mean? Tentatively he puts out a hand in the direction of the dead face in order to make sure, but his courage fails and he pulls away his hand. He gets up and stands there motionless, paralyzed, petrified. Cold shivers run down his spine.

Then we hear a key turning in a lock and a door opening and closing. Next we hear footsteps and the sound of a stick striking the ground at intervals. The sound at once disappears down to the cellar. He rushes to the staircase landing. There is the door. It is a door with reinforced glass panes. The glass is murky and dusty, but sufficiently transparent for him to see that there is somebody in the room, somebody who has been dumped, hands tied together, on a large iron bed with no bedclothes. It is Gisèle! The door is locked and he is just about to look for something with which to break it open when he hears somebody unlocking the main door. Through the murky little pane at the top of the door he can see enough to ascertain that it is Marc coming. There is nothing for it but to return to the consulting-room, and from here

he sees Marc approaching the door between him and Gisèle - he is just putting the key in the lock - when we again hear footsteps of somebody with a wooden leg or a stick. The footsteps come down the stairs. Marc abandons his plan and slips the key back in its hiding-place, which is evidently unknown to the new arrival.

The man with the wooden leg comes limping down the stairs. Under his arm he is carrying a small tool box. The two men meet and together make for the consulting-room, from which Nikolas has followed everything through the half-open door. Now he is obliged to retreat further. He has access only to the room where the coffin stood before.

Marc and the man with the wooden leg now stand beside the coffin.

Nikolas has hidden behind the door of the next room, and as he stands there he discovers an open trap-door leading down to the cellar. Standing right beside the trap-door and peeping through the crack of the door, he is able to follow what the two men are up to.

Marc finds the stump of a cigar on the edge of his writing-desk. He looks questioningly at the other: has he any matches? The other shakes the box to show that it is not empty. Marc lights the cigar. The man with the wooden leg searches for his screwdriver. Obviously it must be with the other tools in the room where Nikolas is. The man goes into this room and makes straight for the wall opposite the door. To avoid being seen as the man returns past him, Nikolas descends the ladder to the cellar, and when he is alone in the room again he is able to stick his head up and see something of what is happening beside the coffin.

There the man is engaged in putting the lid on Nikolas's coffin. Marc stands there, enveloped in tobacco smoke, rocking backwards and forwards on his heels. He has stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and his watchful, malevolent gaze flits rapidly across the coffin and the dead body.

[NIKOLAS' NEW POV - FROM INSIDE THE COFFIN]

The lid of the coffin has a square pane of glass just over the dead man's face.

From down in the coffin Nikolas sees the lid dropped into position over him. He hears the dull blows, first of a hand, then of a hammer, before the lid slips into the groove. He sees alternately something of Marc and of the man at work. Both of them peer down at him. Marc is in high spirits, whereas the other man's face reflects only the craftsman taking care that nothing goes wrong.

Now Nikolas hears, as he lies in the coffin, the lid being screwed down, hears the cutting and screeching noises of the screws, as one by one they bore into the wood. It is impossible to imagine a death sentence having a more paralyzing effect than this sound. At intervals he sees through the glass the elbow of the arm turning the screw. He hears the men's footsteps on the floor; then everything is quiet. Now we hear the sound of the blind woman's footsteps and her stick. She is in the room, standing by the coffin. One hand holds a candle over the glass, the other lights it with a match, and now the blind woman's bony hand grasps the light. She bends her hideous face over the glass in the gleam of the candle. Her blind eyes are unable to see the dead man, but he can see her: she is taking her last leave of him. Nikolas sees Marc moistening two fingers with his tongue and putting out the

light. The blind woman's footsteps die away from the room, and now various men can be seen coming and stationing themselves on either side of the coffin.

The coffin is to be carried through the adjoining room, where at this moment Nikolas is hiding under the trap-door. To clear the way the man with the wooden leg goes over to the trap-door. With his wooden leg he kicks away the wooden block holding the trap-door open, and the trap-door closes over Nikolas. The man gives the door a push so that it comes directly over the trap-door, which in consequence cannot be opened.

Through the square of glass in his coffin Nikolas sees his surroundings change, and realizes that he is being carried out. Ceilings, damp patches, door frames, cobwebs and more door frames pass rhythmically over his field of vision. Then open sky and branches; he is being carried out of the house, round the church, out of the village, away across the fields.

Marc remains standing in the doorway. He throws away the butt of his cigar and searches in his pocket for his pipe, before going back into the room, from the window of which he takes a last look at the coffin.

THE FIELD

Nikolas (his 'ego') is lying on the ground, as when we last saw him. He begins to return to consciousness. The dream he has just had enters his semi-consciousness. He opens his eyes a fraction, as if drowned in sleep, and sees the procession from his dream - at first making straight for him, but presently turning away. He turns to watch it, and discovers that he is lying on the ground outside the churchyard. The funeral procession is making for the churchyard.

Suddenly he is awake - and the dream disappears; the strange procession literally vanishes into empty air. He asks himself whether the whole of this dream may not be a message from Gisèle, and if so what she is trying to tell him. He gets up and goes to

THE ENTRANCE TO THE CHURCHYARD

and looks in. There he sees the old manservant, who is pushing away a large flat stone from over a grave. The coffin in the grave is revealed. It is an old, rotten coffin. The manservant now throws away his shovel, and uses his pick-axe to try and get the lid off. Nikolas has caught up with him. The two men exchange meaningful nods. Then Nikolas jumps down in the grave to help the manservant.

LÉONE'S ROOM

The dying Léone wakes up with a start. Her great eyes stare up at the ceiling, and her face expresses unspeakable and speechless astonishment. The nurse bends over her and asks:

NURSE

What is it you can see?

Léone answers, almost ecstatically:

LÉONE

Now death is coming for me ... I shall not suffer any more!

THE CHURCHYARD

Nikolas and the manservant have succeeded in getting the lid off the coffin. They look with horror at the sight that meets their eyes. In the coffin is lying the old blind woman. Her face is completely untouched, as if she is still alive. She is preternaturally pale and sallow. Neither her breathing nor her heartbeat can be heard. Nikolas looks at her by the light of the lantern.

LÉONE'S ROOM

Léone looks like somebody waiting and listening. The nurse again bends over her and asks:

NURSE

What do you hear?

Léone grips the nurse's hand and answers:

LÉONE

My father ... is calling for me! ...

Her face still has the same expectant, startled expression.

THE CHURCHYARD

The manservant gives the crowbar to Nikolas and himself takes the mallet. Nikolas lifts the crowbar and directs the point at the blind woman's heart. He raises and lowers the crowbar several times in order to take careful aim. Then he lifts it and, turning his face away, plunges it with all his strength into her heart. Nikolas signals to the manservant, who comes up and hammers the crowbar further and further in with the mallet. They both look very serious. Blow after blow echoes around. As soon as the crowbar is hammered home the two men break off from their work and take a step back. They stare down at the grave in consternation. The blind woman's body has disappeared, and in the place where she lay there is now only a bare white skeleton.

LÉONE'S ROOM

Léone as before. The tension and suffering seem to have gone from her face. Staring straight ahead, she whispers as if in a trance:

LÉONE

Now I feel strong ... my soul is free!

THE CHURCHYARD

The gravestone is being pushed back into place. In this shot we see only the coffin, the gravestone and the manservant's hands at work.

THE BLIND WOMAN'S HOUSE

There is a fire in the grate. Marc is lighting another cigar. The man with the wooden leg brings him a cup of coffee. Marc brushes some ash from his trousers and takes a gulp of coffee. Suddenly he raises his head and looks towards the window. The man with the wooden leg observes his movements and goes up to him. They both look at the window, where a face now comes into view. It is Bernard, the man who was murdered at the castle earlier in the night under such mysterious circumstances. The face moves and looks in anxiously, while Bernard's hands protect his eyes against the moonlight. The two men in the room are seized with terror. Marc bends forward, and hastily puts out the light, at the same time signaling to the man with the wooden leg to put out the fire in the grate. The latter pours water over the fire, which

gives out a hissing cloud of steam.

MARC

Go and see the door is properly shut!

The man with the wooden leg goes, leaving the door of the room open, but it bangs behind him, as if blown by a draught. Above the door is a large window. Marc recalls the man with the wooden leg, as if regretting his order. The man turns back hurriedly, but finds the door closed. In surprise he steps back a pace, and through the window above the door he sees a flickering light moving to and fro in the room. In his bewilderment he remains rooted to the spot. Then he hears a sound resembling that of a mother crooning a gentle lullaby over her child, or of a doctor trying to reassure his patient during an operation. At the same time one senses beneath the ingratiating and affectionate tone something threatening, hard and almost ironic - a threat of revenge. Then we hear Marc's voice:

MARC

Oh! Oh! Oh!

On the dirty white pane the shadow of the parrot can be seen in silhouette rocking to and fro, while the silence is suddenly shattered by the parrot's mocking, teasing laughter. The strangely soporific, monotonous voice now begins speaking again; then there is a piercing cry of terror, so frightful and horrifying that the man with the wooden leg rushes in utter panic to the door, tugs at it, hammers on it and throws himself against it with all his strength. Meanwhile scream upon scream resounds, each more frenzied and hair-raising than the last.

Suddenly it is as if an invisible hand seizes the man with the wooden leg and hurls him against the wall opposite the door. The light over the door moves again. The door is opened violently. Marc comes out with every sign of consternation depicted in his face. A sudden gleam of light illumines the room. The parrot, terrified, takes to flight. Marc hurries through the house, rushes out and flees without pausing for a single moment.

But the man with the wooden leg lies motionless on the spot where he was thrown to the ground. His hands grip the handrail convulsively. His face is white, his look bewildered, and his under-jaw hangs down. His eyes are open and have a fixed, vacant expression, as if still seeing the fearful events of the night.

THE CHURCHYARD

The manservant has tidied up the grave and is now putting back the tombstone, on which can be read the following curious inscription: Here lies Marguerite Chopin, born 4 February 1809, died 13 June 1867. Then a catalogue of her virtues.

THE BLIND WOMAN'S HOUSE

We see Nikolas's hand inserting the key in the door guarding Gisèle. He finds it behind the piece of furniture where it is hidden, and inserts it in the lock. The shot is taken in such a way that the spectator is uncertain whether the hand is real or not.

ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE

Marc is running at full speed like a man pursued. He keeps turning round, as if expecting to see his pursuer at every moment.

THE BLIND WOMAN'S HOUSE

Gisèle is lying on her bed, leaning against the wall, with her legs drawn up under her. Her hands are tied behind her back. Nikolas's hands appear on the screen attempting to loosen her bonds. When the knot refuses to yield, he uses his teeth. Both the hands and Nikolas's profile are taken as in the previous shot, i.e., in such a way that the spectator is uncertain whether they are real or not.

ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE

Marc is running away like a man who has lost his reason. Where he is running there is no road or path.

LÉONE'S ROOM

Léone is at the point of death. She is quite calm. An angelic beauty suffuses her face. She smiles. Then she slowly closes her eyes. She gives a deep sigh, like a child just before it falls asleep. She has expired. A hand lays a little gold crucifix on her closed lips.

[ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE]

Marc has run right across the fields, still pursued by his invisible pursuer. Suddenly he is enveloped in mist. It is like steam rising from the earth. The mist gives everything a ghostly appearance. Marc is seized with terror. He does not know where he is. He can neither see nor hear. He is so confused and agitated that he does not know which way to take. He runs first in one direction, then in another, tries to retrace his steps, but is unable to see them because of the mist. He runs in a more and more random manner. He stops for a moment. Then he sees, a short distance away, a light, which seems to come from a lantern, and the faint outlines of a gray shadow, which might be the shadow of a man. He calls, but instead of answering the shadow merely moves away from him. He runs in pursuit of it; but in spite of all his exertions the distance between them remains the same. Speechless with terror, he pursues his frenzied course with his hands spread out in front of him, as if trying to scatter the mist.

Out of the mist there suddenly looms up a great, dense shadow - the shadow of a house which the doctor recognizes: it must be the mill beside the river. The doctor decides to try and hide in the mill. He will be safe there. Listening intently, he opens the door and ventures in, step by step. He passes the room containing the great mill-wheel, which sets the rest of the mill's machinery in motion. At the moment the mill-wheel is completely at rest. So the doctor continues past it, on into the mill's interior, where the white walls look as if they have been seared by a white-hot fire. Absolute stillness reigns everywhere. The doctor arrives at the little square room where the sacks are filled with the finely ground flour. He enters the room and peers around. The ceiling of this little room consists of a sieve, which can be made to oscillate backwards and forwards, and through which the newly ground flour must pass before it can fall into the open sacks.

The doctor is about to leave this room when the grated door behind him bangs shut. At the same time the mill-wheel starts turning as if set in motion by an invisible hand. The grinding rhythm of the mill-wheel is transmitted to the many other wheels in the mill and blends with them into a dismal, monotonous drone, which penetrates to the marrow and strikes the doctor as ominous. He becomes still more uneasy on realizing that the sieve above his head is beginning to oscillate backwards and forwards, shaking one load of flour after another over him with clockwork regularity. Suddenly he sees

through the sieve the shadow of the old manservant Joseph, to whom he calls, holding his hand over his eyes to protect them. But Joseph remains silent and ignores the doctor, who is caught in his trap. In his frustration the doctor tugs at the grated door, but all in vain.

The flour drifts down and down. It is already up to the doctor's knees, and he is almost completely out of breath. He is seized with ungovernable rage, and with clenched fists he threatens the silent and invisible pursuers who are incarcerating him in this white terror. He stares straight ahead, as if hoping to penetrate the flour dust's white darkness with his gaze. The flour rises higher and higher in the cage with its many gratings, and has now reached the doctor's chest. He writhes and struggles desperately, with his one free hand he digs like a madman. All without result. The flour has powdered his hair and eyebrows completely white. He shouts - is silent for a moment - shouts again - but nobody answers. His fate is inexorable. He weeps and screams for help. The flour is up to his face, he closes his mouth and presses his lips together. The flour reaches his mouth. His head slowly disappears. His last expression is a malevolent grimace. A reflection of light gleams in one of his glasses. When it too is extinguished.

THE RIVER

Cross-cutting with the scenes described above recording Marc's death are scenes showing Nikolas and Gisèle on their way down to the river. When they reach the bank, they find it veiled in a white mist so thick as almost to blot out the opposite bank. A boat is lying right at their feet. They jump down in it, and Nikolas seizes the oars and starts rowing. When he has taken a few pulls out into the river, the mist grows thicker; but he continues to row. Now they cannot even see the bank they have just left. Gisèle stares anxiously around, and Nikolas rests on the oars to get his bearings. But they see that they are completely enveloped in mist. They are somewhat uneasy and confused. Nikolas puts his hands up to his mouth as a megaphone and calls:

NIKOLAS

Hullo!

No answer.

Nikolas calls again, and Gisèle joins in:

NIKOLAS AND GISÈLE

Hullo!

Far away a man's voice can be heard answering:

THE VOICE

Hullo!

Nikolas stands up and shouts:

NIKOLAS

We're completely lost!

After a short pause he adds:

NIKOLAS

Where are we?

The voice from the other bank:

THE VOICE

This way!

NIKOLAS

Thank you.

He sits down again and begins to row. He rows in silence for a moment without getting any closer to the bank. Gisèle is kneeling in the bow keeping a look-out. The mist is now so thick that Nikolas can only distinguish her as a dark shadow. She says:

GISÈLE

Do you think it's that way?

He rests on the oars, and the boat drifts with the gentle current. An eddy catches it, and it starts spinning round and round. Nikolas shouts:

NIKOLAS

Hullo!

The reply comes from a completely different direction from what he had expected, and is much further away than the first time.

THE VOICE

Hullo!

Nikolas and Gisèle shout together: Hullo!

THE VOICE

... This way!

GISÈLE

Where are you?

THE VOICE

(very distinctly,
a word at a time)

Wait ... we ... will ... light ... a ... fire!

NIKOLAS

Good!

Nikolas stays where he is, but backs water so as not to be carried further away by the current. On the bank we see the ferryman, whom we recognize from the opening of the film; he is signaling to a number of small boys to collect straw and wood for a bonfire. Presently a strong flame shoots up, but the light from the fire, instead of piercing the blanket of mist, seems able only to make it shine like a white wall.

In the boat Nikolas and Gisèle keep their eyes fixed on the place where they think the bank must be. Nikolas shouts impatiently:

NIKOLAS

Hullo!

FERRYMAN

Can you see there?

GISÈLE

What did you say?

FERRYMAN

Can you see the fire?

GISÈLE

No!

The ferryman stands and ponders for a moment. Then he goes to the bonfire himself to throw a bit more straw on it, saying to the boys:

FERRYMAN

Sing, children!

The boys exchange slightly embarrassed glances; then one of them begins to sing, and the others join in. A number of women, who have arrived on the scene, also join in the singing. The verse which they sing is:

Hark, an angel bears its light
Through the gates of heaven.
By God's angel's beams so bright
All the black nocturnal shades are driven.

During the singing the boat has come close in to the bank. For the two people in the boat the singing sounds curiously muffled, even if they can hear it distinctly. Then it ceases. The ferryman hears the oars on the water. Nikolas and Gisèle now see the fire and the ferryman, who is walking along the bank, following the rhythmical sound of the oars and the creaking of the rowlocks. Now the boat pulls into the bank, and the ferryman wades out into the water in order to catch hold of the prow and pull the boat ashore.

Nikolas and Gisèle jump ashore. When they reach the top of the bank, the mist melts away. The path leads them into a little cluster of birches. The sun breaks through the clouds. They have left the night and the shadows behind them. In front of them are mountain ranges and light. They still hear, as if proclaimed by heavenly bells:

Hark, an angel bears its light ...