

DRACULA AND THE ECO WARRIOR

By Paul Stebbings and Phil Smith

For TNT theatre and ADG Europe.

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

Jonathan Harker, a lawyer, is being sent to the USA to negotiate a property deal on behalf of Ecotown. Ecotown is a model community that is built on renewable energy, local democracy and respect for the environment in all areas of its daily life. Harker's boss is Lucy Renfield, finance officer of Ecotown. Lucy has a practical side to her, she is aware that Ecotown is having financial problems and that the town needs investment. Jonathan is being sent to Pennsylvania to seal a deal that will bring significant investment to Ecotown and solve the financial crisis. A Senator Dracula in Pennsylvania is interested in buying several old properties that have been given to Ecotown but are too old fashioned to make into modern carbon neutral homes. All these houses have large cellars, something Dracula has demanded.

The play opens with Harker stranded in an American airport. Sudden storms, probably caused by climate change, have grounded all aircraft. The airport is a nightmare of stranded passengers. Harker is desperate to get to Pennsylvania to meet Dracula. Harker phones Lucy who tells him to get to Dracula at any cost. Harker leaves the airport to find transport, but there is none. Trains have stopped running, the taxi ranks are empty. Wind and dust howls around the buildings. At last he finds a drunken car driver who will take him to Pennsylvania for serious money. He journeys in the smashed up automobile through an urban nightmare, a landscape ruined by heavy industrial pollution, ravaged by unemployment and urban decay. He arrives in the City, looking for his client's massive skyscraper: Dracula Tower. When his driver realises where he is going he throws Harker out of the car and drives off at speed, consumed by terror at the very name of Dracula.

Harker sets off on foot towards the Tower. The journey is an urban nightmare. He is assaulted and harassed by beggars, alcoholics and junkies. He flees into a broken down shopping mall where most of the shops are in ruins, desperate sales staff try to sell him useless trinkets and gadgets, accessories and fashion items that he neither wants nor needs. There is a power cut. In the frightening dark he staggers towards the Tower and all the time there is the noise of drilling from under the earth and tremors like small earthquakes. Just as it seems he will be beaten up and mugged there is the sound of a helicopter and he is dragged aboard to safety and flown to the top of Dracula's Skyscraper by a mysterious pilot. The helicopter flies off leaving him hundreds of meters up in the sky on the roof of the Tower.

Harker descends into the Tower, through empty offices with broken windows where filing cabinets spew papers, dust gathers on blank computer screens and rats scamper through deserted corridors. He tries to phone his wife, Mina, but there is no signal. He records his impressions into his smartphone.

At last he descends into an inhabited floor, suddenly he is in a dimly lit room without windows that resembles an antique library or old fashioned gentleman's club. A Robot appears and offers him dark, almost black, wine. Then Dracula appears at last. He is charming, he asks Harker to relax and then discusses the business project in Ecotown. They agree to meet the next evening to finalise the deal. But Harker is unnerved when he cuts his finger peeling fruit and Dracula responds bizarrely by licking the wound.

Harker sleeps deeply and wakes to find it is night again. There is Dracula. They talk, Harker outlines all that Ecotown stands for and hopes to achieve. Dracula agrees with everything but twists Harker's words so it is not clear whether Dracula approves of Ecotown or wants to pervert its dream, twist it to his own ends. He forces Harker to confess that the properties for sale are useless to Ecotown, too expensive to turn into carbon neutral homes and a drain on their resources to maintain. But Dracula is still happy to buy, happy to invest in Ecotown as long as certain conditions are met, for example being free to exploit the earth beneath his properties. Harker agrees to everything with the support of Lucy his Boss, his phone suddenly works again. Dracula at one point seizes the phone and tricks Harker into giving him the profiles and contact information for both Lucy and Mina. What does he want? The deal is sealed with more red/black wine and Dracula retires as it is almost day. Harker is told he may go anywhere in the Tower as long as the doors are not locked

and that they will meet again the next night. Is Harker a prisoner? He is not sure. He is sure that he needs natural light that the claustrophobia of the sealed Tower is disturbing him.

Harker explores the Tower, at last he finds a window. It is almost dawn. The Moon throws its light over the decayed city, Harker sees Dracula crawling down the side of the skyscraper like a giant lizard. In the street below a beggar and her child collect oil from puddles to sell. He watches with horror as the Vampire kills and sucks the blood from the child of beggar and then drinks the oil. Harker runs away in terror but where can he go? He jumps into an elevator that rises and falls at alarming speed until the doors open deep in the basement of the Tower. He walks through long tunnels towards the sound of drilling. All the time he records his experiences into his phone hoping that he can send the file when he gets a Wi-Fi signal. At last he reaches the drilling. Two women workers are drilling, fracking for oil beneath the foundations of the City. They entice him to their side, they speak of oil and drilling in a sensual way and he falls for their charms but just as they reveal their Vampire's teeth and are about to consume him Dracula appears and claims Harker for himself. Harker collapses in terror.

ACT TWO

The central character of the rest of the play is Mina, Jonathan's wife. She is a doctor and alternative medicine therapist. She is best friend of Lucy Renfield. She is seen as the guiding light of Ecotown, its conscience and inspiration. Her idealism goes beyond the practical into the spiritual and she and many others in Ecotown worship the planet in the form of a faith in the old the pagan Earth Mother goddess, Gaia.

The Act opens with daily life in Ecotown: a scientist explains the new mini solar panels to Mina, a gardener barter recyclable waste for organic vegetables. But the picture is not all positive, Mina meets a second scientist who is testing water pollution, it is good news as many species have returned to the clean waters around Ecotown but the water levels are rising, storms are predicted, high tides probable. Local effort alone cannot stop climate change. That is why Ecotown is important as model that can be copied on a global scale. Mina and Lucy both believe this, but have different ideas how to achieve this. But Mina's optimism is compromised by her worries over Jonathan. She has heard nothing from her husband since he flew to the USA except a few broken up cell phone conversations. She knows from

Lucy that Jonathan met Dracula but no more than that. Dracula communicates with Lucy, says he will arrive soon in Ecotown to take up residence and to bring investment but answers none of her questions about Harker. Lucy suspects Jonathan has made a private deal with Dracula and will appear together with what may be his new boss. Mina refuses to believe this. The old friends argue. Lucy does not want to frighten off this vital investor by pushing him for an answer about Harker.

The weather is getting worse. A storm rising. Out at sea an oil tanker is in trouble. Mina watches from the shore. The ship's Captain is not responding. A rescue helicopter lands, taking on a fireman to go out to the ship. Mina persuades the crew to allow her to fly with them out to the ship as she is a Doctor and there must be injured aboard. They winch to the ship's deck only to find most of the crew missing. The fireman goes searching sailors and then is murdered. Mina finds the Captain strapped to the wheel, also dead. Taking radio messages she navigates the tanker into the port but just as she is about to do so safely Dracula appears unseen behind her and knocks her out. The tanker crashes into the harbour pouring polluting oil into the clean sea. Two black seals swim out into the oil, and barking or howling like dogs then wolves escape onto land. Is it Dracula and Harker? Mina is in hospital, being visited by Lucy. Lucy explains that the oil disaster is also an opportunity to show how Ecotown can cope with ecological disaster. Mina is unsure and still worried by Jonathan's disappearance.

Lucy leaves Mina and meets with Dracula who has taken up residence in the large old house. They work on the deal, he tempts her with his money and power, she with her vision and idealism. They realise they have much in common. Each is fascinated by the other, each wants to achieve something big. They seal their deal with a kiss. The "dog" who brushes against Lucy in the dark and hovers under Dracula's table is really Harker - now the Vampire's servant. Lucy talks to Mina by phone in hospital and is guilty, worried that she has compromised her principles with Dracula but feels she has to do anything to save Ecotown and what it means for the globe.

That night there are two parallel stalkings: Harker breaks into the hospital and Dracula breaks into Lucy's house. Mina is overjoyed to see her husband but realises he is mad, almost an animal. Distracted by eating flies she manages to fetch a syringe and tranquilise him. Meanwhile Dracula, invited in by Lucy bites her neck and seals her fate. Mina calls Lucy and Lucy races to the hospital, keeping secret Dracula's visit. Mina discharges herself from hospital. She insists that

Lucy take her to Dracula to discover what has happened to Jonathan in Pennsylvania. Lucy arrives on a fast motorbike. This shocks Mina but she accepts the ride if it gets her to Dracula. Lucy terrifies Mina and almost kills them both by driving fast to the Town Hall where she says Dracula is speaking to the people of Ecotown. To Mina's horror she sees that Dracula is sitting in the shadows whilst it is Jonathan Harker who is speaking to the crowd of citizens. Harker is giving a speech denying that climate change exists or is caused by humans. He is asking the public to rebel against the "green dictatorship" and get back a booming economy, get their jobs back, get their cars back, end dependence on foreign oil. Dracula can do this. There is oil beneath Ecotown in the shale. Fracking can save the town and make them all rich! The crowd respond with enthusiasm, chanting Dracula's name. Mina is amazed and frightened. She tries to stop Harker but Dracula challenges her and throws her aside. Harker and Dracula jump on the motorbike and speed away.

Interval

ACT THREE.

The second half starts with comedy/satire:

A YouTube clip - a man enters a fast food restaurant and asks for a vegetarian meal, he is sold the most unhealthy burger imaginable, when he complains the counter attendant leaps over the table and bites his throat until the customer collapses from blood loss. This is after all Murder King (or SuckDonulds). Lucy and Mina laugh at the clip which has been projected from Lucy's Tablet. Mina asks Lucy why she will not go to the police, she hesitates and Mina becomes suspicious. When Mina kisses Lucy good bye she tastes oil on her breath. Now she knows Lucy is in league with Dracula.

Mina goes online and through use of search engines and VPNs and Wikipedia traces the Vampire expert and hunter Professor Van Helsing. They agree to meet in the "Second World" virtual reality space.

Dracula and Harker disperse anti-fracking protesters with verbal and physical violence. The fracking will begin.

Mina meets Van Helsing in Second Life. Their avatars talk and Mina learns how she might with luck defeat Dracula. If she rejects violence there is only one weapon left – strong sunlight. Helsing vanishes, worried that Dracula is pursuing him in Virtual Reality too. A

Vampire avatar appears and Mina quickly logs out. Now she has a plan.

Dracula and Lucy are riding the motorbike, their vision seems the same – Ecotown as Big Business. But Dracula speeds up the bike until they crash into a sink hole caused by fracking, he gently dismounts but Lucy is flung over the handle bars and killed. He sucks the corpse dry then leaves. He has all he wants from Lucy now he needs more, he needs Mina. He must corrupt the idealist Mina, the soul of Ecotown.

Lucy's funeral. It rains endlessly. A storm out at sea. Is the Climate at tipping point? The sky is so dark, black clouds, it might almost be night.

Mina slips in the mud and is washed out to sea. Dracula saves her from the flood and takes her to dry land. There beneath the sacred tree they talk. She has a sharpened holly stakes, she threatens to attack him. He laughs at her, saying stakes do not work. He guesses she has spoken to Van Helsing and claims that Helsing is his invention, Second Word is owned by him and he was playing a game with Mina. Does she believe him? Maybe for she sinks in despair, He starts to tempt her. He talks of their shared idealism their shared knowledge that humanity is the cause of the environmental destruction of the planet and that in her heart she knows there are too many humans and until there are less the planet is in danger. Humans are the virus that will destroy the world. Mina cannot deny what he says. They argue but their argument is a type of flirtation. He cuts open his neck and she drinks his black blood. They lie together under the sacred tree. Dracula is triumphant but he is also obsessed with Mina and his obsession is his weakness. The sun is due to rise, he must retreat his cellar but Mina's charms tempt him to stay too long. Her surrender was only pretence and she throws back the cloak that was over them and lets the sun fall on his body. With a scream Dracula shrivels to nothing, just a pile of ash.

Mina takes the ash to pour into the sea, to recycle the Vampire and Harker is there, restored to sanity by the death of his Master. All seems well, but as they embrace, reconciled and healed Mina lightly kisses Harker's neck. Are those teeth growing? Is the Vampire of ecological destruction still among us and the true horror story only now about to begin?

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Note: changes may occur in rehearsal.