

Jonathan Harker's Journal

May 3rd, The Year of The Monkey

I'm not sure if it really is the year of the monkey but an orang-utan has been following me around since I left London and I can't seem to get rid of it.

The bloody train was late. I left the house early in case by some miracle it might be on time or God forbid early. I thought I would take a gentle stroll to the station. I wrapped it in a box and put it in my travel bag.

I had not made it very far when a thought struck me. I knew it would leave a bruise which would not look good when I reached my destination. The thought was this – Why are my legs cold? I looked down to find I was wearing shorts. Although it was May, and the weather was fine, I did not think it good business practise to go on a business trip in Bermuda shorts.

After a swift return to my house, I decided to get a coach to the station. I was still early for the train. I had a coffee. It tasted like shit. Damn British Rail cutbacks.

By May 1st I had made it to Munich. I could have made it there quicker if the trains had been on time. I did not have much time to spare in Munich. I did not have much change either as the orang-utan had asked me for a banana milkshake. I would love to know how it came to be travelling with me.

From Munich I travelled to Venice. I found out on arrival that this should have been Vienna. This bugged my plans up no end. My spare change had run out, and I needed to get to Vienna to catch my connecting train. After some persuasion, some dishwashing and some minor prostitution I was able to pay my way to Vienna.

I had to run through Budapest station like an Olympic athlete and managed to leap at my train just as it was about to depart the station. Unfortunately the doors were not quick enough in opening. My nose is still sore.

Once onboard, with two pieces of toilet roll stuck up my nostrils, I settled in for the next part of my journey. As I had only made it to the train by the crack of my

nose, I believed that my hairy companion must have been left behind. I peeled a banana to eat in his memory. Before I could take a bite, a big orange arm reached over from the seat behind and plucked it from my hand. He was starting to get on my fucking nerves.

I arrived in Klausenburgh later that evening and was required to check into a hotel for an overnight stay. I preferred it to sleeping on the street. I had a chicken dinner, which was made using some lengthy foreign recipe. I made a note to get a copy of it for Mina, she loves cooking. She's not good at it but she likes to burn things. I'm sure that she is a pyromaniac at heart.

I retired to my room soon afterwards. I was delighted to find that the room had wonderfully soft king-sized bed. I was, however, rather pissed to find that the right hand side was occupied by a large orange hump. He was snoring too. And his lanky arms were strewn over the other side of the bed. Had the bed not been so soft I would have slept in the chair. Instead I struggled to contain him on his own side of the bed and created a barrier of pillows down the centre of the mattress. I had no notion of what kind of ideas an orang-utan could get into its head and was not in a hurry to find out.

The night passed quickly. The orang-utan passed wind frequently. I passed out twice from the smell.

I was late for breakfast. Bloody hotel alarm clocks. I would have blamed the orang-utan but he was still asleep and snoring with such a deep rattle it was moving my bowels. I hadn't been for three days so it was a welcome movement.

I made it to the station just in time. At least I would have been just in time had the train not been late. I had to spend an hour in the carriage before we moved. It did give me time to leaf through some booklets I had picked up in tourist information. My client, Count Dracula, had mentioned some of the beautiful landscapes that I would see. He was certainly not mistaken. If I was not soon to be married I would be very happy staying here with the landscape in the seat opposite me.

I arrived at the destination of Bistritz just after sunset. I had been given the name of the hotel I was to stay in for the night. The Golden Crone Hotel. I half

expected to find an immensely valuable statue of an old hag waiting to greet me. Instead I got one made of flesh and bone.

She stood in the doorway as though she had been awaiting my arrival. When I saw an orange bulk in the hallway behind her I realised why. How the little shit had made it to the hotel before me I had no idea.

The woman was wearing clothes that were so tight I could see every bone in her body. I could also see very vividly the bulges of the pale, wrinkly flesh covering the bones. I felt my breakfast knocking on the door to my stomach asking to come out. I slid an extra bolt across to hold it down.

The hotel itself was not what I had expected. It was a shithole. I had believed the Count would have provided me with something decent as it was at his request I stay there. The windows were dirty, the door had a hole in it and there was some nasty stains on the hall carpet, which for once were not from the orang-utan.

Once I was inside the hotel, the old woman was joined by an old man. I suddenly felt very young.

“You are Mr Harker,” the woman stated.

“I was the last time I checked,” I said.

She said something to the old man that I did not understand. The orang-utan jumped up and down, clapping his hands together like two soggy loaves of bread. I hated to think he knew something I didn't.

A moment later the old man handed me a letter. It was written in a dark red ink.

“My good friend. Welcome to my country. I am eager to meet you, and learn of the details you have for me regarding our transaction. I should also like to enquire as to whether you carry a donor card. I like to check these things for Health and Safety records. At three tomorrow you will leave for Bukovina, and at the Borgo Pass I will have a carriage waiting for you. It will be black and have four wheels. I hope your journey so far has been enjoyable and our pitiful train service has not put you out too much – All my love, Dracula.”

Behind me the orang-utan farted. The old man and woman passed out. I held my nose and climbed the stairs to my room. I closed and locked the door before the orang-utan could get in. I intended to have at least one decent sleep and now I have completed this journal entry I shall retire to bed. I would much prefer to be retiring to the Bahamas.

May 4th

I discovered that my hosts had received instruction from Dracula to save be the best seat on the coach for the next part of my journey. One with a TV and minibar would have been appreciated but was apparently not possible. I was beginning to think that Count Dracula was a tight bastard.

I enquired with the old man and old woman as to what they could tell me about the Count. They immediately crossed themselves, then each other, then their legs and finally their eyes. They looked like they needed the toilet. I wanted to question them further but they refused to speak. With their eyes crossed I was not sure whether they were refusing to speak to me or someone behind me.

Later, as I packed to leave, the old woman came to my room. She was somewhat hysterical.

“Do not go,” she pleaded. “Do you know what day it is?”

“Thursday,” I said.

“A dark, dark day.”

“I thought it was quite bright this morning. It’s almost the weekend too.”

“It is the eve of St George’s Day! At midnight tonight, when the night has come and the land is dark, and the full moon is the only light there is.”

“I won’t be afraid,” I said. “As long as the orang-utan stands by me.”

“You will need more than him. All the evil demons of the world will be out tonight.”

“It’s ok, I’m probably having a night in.”

She continued to plead with me to stay, and although I was missing Mina and had begun to feel a little randy I had to draw the line somewhere. My line was drawn about thirty years younger than her! I told her I had to go.

“Then take this with you,” she said, handing me a crucifix.

It was bent, chipped in the corner and I couldn't tell if it was made of metal or long stale chewing gum. Regardless I put it around my neck. I'm sure I will learn the answer if it rips out my chest hair when I take it off.

The woman is a freak obviously, although I do feel a little uneasy for her ranting. I also feel an itch in the crack of my arse.

I am now on the roadside, writing this part of my journal and I can see the coach is approaching. I'd better have a half decent seat and not some rat-eaten half-stuffed cushion that is covered in piss stains an—

May 5th

Today the weather was shit. It rained cats and dogs for most of the day. The cats set my allergies off and I've been sneezing all over. They should have given me a room with green sheets.

I do not presently feel tired, and I'd rather wait until my blanket dries before drifting off to sleep. I will probably stick to it otherwise. Until then I will update this journal of mine. There are many peculiar things for me to put down. I've been carrying them around too long and my arms are aching. I also have some strange occurrences to jot down here.

My last entry finished prematurely when the coach almost drove straight by me. I have been advised not to stand on the side of the road jotting in a pad or I will always be mistaken for a traffic warden and could be run over.

When I was on board the coach I glanced out of the window, expecting to see the old man and woman waving me off. Instead I was greeted with the sight of a dozen or more of the hotel's guests watching me. I felt like a celebrity. I checked my crotch. The zip was up so that was fine. I waved at the crowd then I noticed

that they seemed to be talking in hushed tongues to each other. They had mufflers over their mouths.

As the coach pulled away the crowd began making signs of the cross at me with their fingers, and pointing their two fingers at me. I pointed my two fingers at them. One of the other passengers told me that the sign they were making was a sign to ward away evil. I told him that my sign was telling them to fuck off, which I felt was a more efficient way of warding off evil.

I could have felt uneasy being in a coach full of strangers, but they were all very jolly and charming and I could not help but be touched by them. I had to slap one woman who was touching me a bit too intimately. I was gagging for some action and temptations like that did not help.

I glanced out the window at the passing landscape. It was quite boring after a while. My mind drifted and I momentarily found myself wondering on what had become of my unwanted travelling companion. He had not attempted to get into my room during my last night at The Golden Krone, nor had I seen a hair of him when leaving on the coach. I began to believe that he had taken the hint and attached himself to someone else. What kind of respectable businessman had a bloody orange monkey for an associate?

The journey to the Borgo Pass was quicker than I expected. The driver of the coach seemed not to notice the numerous potholes and deep cracks that should have hindered his progress as he spurred his horses on at speed. I felt lucky to be alive. I didn't feel happy to have thumped my head against the coach roof a dozen or more times, nor was I particularly amused when my case jumped off the rack and burst open to reveal my underwear. I wouldn't have particularly minded if that was all it had shown, but when the underwear fell aside it exposed my bundle of cheap porn I had bought while crossing the continent.

After that embarrassing incident I was eager to leave the coach and board that provided by Dracula to carry me onward to his castle. Arriving at the Pass, however, we discovered no carriage. As if I was not already feeling like a fool, I now had to suffer the other passengers believing that I had been stood up by my associate. The Count was going down in my estimation with each passing day.

Just then another coach approached. It was big and black, pulled by four black horses and was driven by a tall thin figure dressed in black.

One of the passengers gasped beside me. He was obviously a ventriloquist as he was sitting opposite me.

“It’s the Black Coach!” he said in horror.

“How did it get its name?” I asked casually.

A deathly silence drifted through the coach. It was carrying a bouquet of lilies and wearing a mourning veil.

I stepped out of the coach hastily. The atmosphere inside had become dark. I believe the overhead light had gone off and only the emergency exit light was offering any illumination.

The driver of the Black Coach was still seated behind his horses. He did not seem a talkative fellow. I overheard him exchanging words with the driver of the coach I had just departed. I think he was robbed when he exchanged two vowels for a consonant but I felt I should not interfere in the bargaining.

“You are here early,” the Black Coach driver said. His voice was like black tar. I watched it pool on the floor beneath him.

“The English tosspot was in a hurry to arrive,” the other driver responded.

“Don’t lie. I know you wanted to take him beyond this point, didn’t you?”

“No. He was only paid up to here. I don’t do free rides.”

“Then you may go and leave him with me. Farewell.”

I was not particularly enthused by the short conversation. I resented being called a tosspot. I was happy to be shot of the other coach and its driver if that was his opinion of me. I would much rather be in the company of the Black Coach driver with his shadowed face, bone-white hands and sinister voice.

“You may board the coach, Mr Harker,” he told me.

As he spoke I was able to see a little of his face. It looked like he had been eating blackberries for his lips appeared to be deep red in colour. In contrast he was obviously wearing false teeth for they were fiercely pointed and appeared pearly white, like the teeth of an image conscious shark.

Although there was no-one on board, the driver stressed that I should sit up front with him. I hated stressed people, they made me nervous. I took the seat next to him and he handed me a blanket. When he spoke to me it was in a brilliant German dialect.

“I have been instructed to make sure your journey is safe and comfortable. There is cup-a-soup in the flask under your seat.”

His brilliant German dialect sounded strangely English. I knew this because I could not speak German but I understood everything he said.

He cracked his whip and the coach began to move. This made me slightly uneasy as the horses were still standing still. The coach dipped as though it had been jumped on by some wild animal, and I heard the coach door slamming shut. It seemed the holes in the road were becoming deep enough to knock the doors open.

As we pulled away, I looked across at the other coach. The passengers were all crossing themselves and pointing two fingers at me. I stuck my two fingers up and stuck my tongue out for good measure.

The coach moved at speed through the darkness and horses just managed to keep up with it. I watched the road as best I could. It was always under us which was a good thing. It was full of holes, which was not so good when I was trying to drink my soup. I spilt most of it on my face – the rest hit my mouth by pure fluke.

After a short time I noticed something strange about our journey. We were passing the same place over and over again. I did not want to point it out, but as far as I was concerned my driver was lost. Either that or he was simply wasting time. It was getting close to midnight, that time I had been told that evil things began to happen and the driver had started muttering some wicked chant to himself. The full moon was casting light onto the dark road, and casting a net into the sky to catch some stars. I couldn't see why the driver would want to stall for time.

Suddenly I noticed a blue flame just off the road ahead of us. Obviously they have gas leaks out here too. The driver obviously wanted to heat up his soup as he stopped the coach and ran to where the flame flickered.

By some trick of my eyes, for a short moment I believed that I could actually see the flame through the driver's body. I hadn't been drinking, and I could only assume that I was maybe in need of sleep. I watched as the driver gathered a number of stones around the area the blue flame had first appeared. It looked like he was building it a house – he must have been a jack of all trades.

I was distracted by a chilling howl from in front of the coach. They must keep their howls in the fridge in this part of the world. When I followed the sound I found a terrible sight before me. Two wolves were shagging on the road. That was much worse a sight to me than the other dozen that were baring their teeth at me. As my Mina was back in London I wasn't getting any, but out here even the wolves were having it off.

The wolves moved towards the coach, growling deep in their throats. This affected me and the horses – we all shit ourselves. I realized that I had nothing to protect myself other than some lukewarm cup-a-soup and was starting to feel edgy. My pants were feeling crowded.

I yelled for the coach driver to help.

“Coach driver, help!”

I looked over to the side of the road. The driver was nowhere to be seen. What a time for him to nip into the woods for a piss. I began banging on the side of the coach, hoping to attract his attention. Instead I attracted more wolves.

I banged harder on the coach. Below me, the door to the coach opened a fraction and a fat hand with orange hair on the knuckles poked out, followed by a fat head with orange hair on the ears and nose.

“Oook!” the orang-utan said before closing the door again.

Somehow I was certain it had just sworn at me. I wondered how it had managed to follow me from The Golden Crone without being spotted. Then I realised that it probably had been spotted by many people, just not by me.

Behind me I heard the voice of the coach driver. I turned to find him standing between the coach and the thirty-eight wolves my coach-banging had attracted. There would have been forty, but I did not feel the pair who had moved to one side to continue their shag could really pose a threat to us.

I watched as the driver approached the pack. He raised his arms above his head. The wolves began to howl. He lowered his right arm, and the right half of the pack lowered their tone. I watched him conduct them through a unique version of Beethoven's 5th Symphony before a dark cloud covered the moon and the road was plunged into darkness. I gave a standing ovation.

A moment later the driver climbed back onto the coach and told me to sit down. I did so as the moon returned – it was carrying a magazine and eating a bag of crisps. When I looked at the road, the wolves were gone.

I was becoming a little unnerved by the strange occurrences that seemed to be becoming more peculiar as my journey progressed. People constantly pointing two fingers at me, the old woman at The Golden Crone, the blue flame, the wolves. I'd probably just lead a sheltered life.

The moon continued to come and go like a torch with a faulty battery throughout the journey, and during moments of blackness I feared that we may leave the road and crash into more wolves shagging on the roadside. During the periods of moonlight, I was able to see that we were ascending dark mountain paths. The driver seemed to know the roads well. He was able to round tight corners without slowing and appeared at one point to be asleep. Every now and then I heard a thump from within the coach as the orang-utan was flung around like a sack of potatoes. It made me smile.

I must have fallen asleep at some point, for all of a sudden the coach began to slow. I looked around. We were in a large courtyard at the end of which stood the dark outline of a ruined castle. The outline was filled with more ruins. Something told me this was Castle Dracula – there was a neon sign over the doorway that said "Castle Dracula."

I had arrived.

The coach jerked to a halt, and there was a thump from within the coach and grunt that sounded like "Oook."

The orang-utan had arrived with me. I hoped Dracula had more than one spare room.