



Dracul

Dacre Stoker, J.D. Barker

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The prequel to *Dracula*, inspired by notes and texts left behind by the author of the classic novel, *Dracul* is a riveting novel of gothic suspense that reveals not only Dracula's true origins but Bram Stoker's -- and the tale of the enigmatic woman who connects them.

It is 1868, and a twenty-one-year-old Bram Stoker waits in a desolate tower to face an indescribable evil. Armed only with crucifixes, holy water, and a rifle, he prays to survive a single night, the longest of his life. Desperate to record what he has witnessed, Bram scribbles down the events that led him here...

A sickly child, Bram spent his early days bedridden in his parents' Dublin home, tended to by his caretaker, a young woman named Ellen Crone. When a string of strange deaths occur in a nearby town, Bram and his sister Matilda detect a pattern of bizarre behavior by Ellen -- a mystery that deepens chillingly until Ellen vanishes suddenly from their lives. Years later, Matilda returns from studying in Paris to tell Bram the news that she has seen Ellen -- and that the nightmare they've thought long ended is only beginning.

Dracul Details

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Author : Dacre Stoker , J.D. Barker

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From Reader Review Dracul for online ebook

Latasha says

First of all, I would like to say thank you a million times to G.P. Putman's Son for sending me a copy of the book. Thank you a million & one!

ok, so Dracul-

To be honest, it took me a while to get into this book. But once I did get into the story, maybe around 100 pages, 75? I was in! The is the tale of Bram as a (sickly) child and his adventures with his sister Matilda. Something strange is going on with Nana Ellen but they don't know what. We can guess though. Ellen Crone is very interesting. I liked her and all the characters. And like I said, the story is a little slow at the start but stick with it. It gets better!

What I didn't like- The ending. the 22 years later part. I was wondering how this would tie to the Dracula we know & love but I wasn't expecting that. It seemed jarring & took me out of the story. The author's note at the end was very interesting and had info about Dracula (the novel) I didn't know. Happy Halloween!

Peter says

Malignant

The comparisons and connections between Dracul and Bram Stoker's Dracula are inevitable and unavoidable. After all, this is the story of Bram Stoker's early life, his family and what may have been the catalyst for his classic vampire story. Dracula has become the most popular monster figure ever, spawning a ubiquitous vampire theme across multiple genres. In Bram's life, the second half of the 19th century, vampires were seen as pure monsters, whereas nowadays, we have them appearing as charismatic, powerful, intelligent, loyal and talented exemplars of human desire. Not to be fooled, we also portray them as ruthless and pure destructive evil.

Dacre Stoker and J.D. Barker treat us to a wonderful dramatic spine-chilling account of Bram Stoker's early life, which is packed full of suspense and horror to rival the Dracula story itself, and positioned as a prequel. The story structure is very similar to Dracula, using an epistolary form, but over 2 time periods, the now of Bram at 21 years of age, and the past accounts of the Stoker siblings laid out in letters and journals from Bram and others including his sister Matilda and brother Thornley. The story combines factual details with fictional creativity in such a seamless manner that we cannot tell which parts are which. It all blends to accomplish a plot that adds unique elements and has us living a nightmare where our imagination challenges our fundamental beliefs. Our frail grip on reality slips as the unimaginable seems possible. The control in the writing to hold together the various threads and narrative elements is very well delivered. Sometimes the pace slacks and this is especially frustrating following the transition from one journal account to another.

The Bram of, now, sits in a room with a Bowie knife and Enfield rifle, where we can feel the palpable fear and fatigue as he struggles to get through a night with a powerful monster that has multiple nefarious tricks and deceptions, locked behind a reinforced door. A door that is reinforced with locks, bolts, holy water, roses, and Holy Communion wafer paste.

Reconstructing Bram's history from his journals, and letters from Matilda, tell of the nanny, Ellen Crone. A mysterious and miraculous saviour of Bram on a number of occasions.

"It is clear he was meant to die as a child, yet his alliance with this unholy creature has garnered him more years; a deal with the Devil, possibly worse, if such a thing is imaginable.."

When Bram and Matilda investigate Nanna Ellen's room and follow her into the countryside, they confirm her to be a preternatural being (view spoiler). Even with the supernatural threat she carries, they have developed a caring relationship with her, especially Bram who has a deep extrasensory connection. The authors have decidedly followed the modern acceptance that not all monsters should be totally evil and perhaps there is a watchful, even protective, connection with her.

The birth and sickly youth of Bram, an early precarious climb up a castle tower, several isolated engagements, and the monster behind the door, convey an ever-present atmosphere of impending trauma. The sense of a precipice are prevailing themes throughout the story and are used masterfully to maintain a chilling suspense. The tone gets darker and more frightening in the second half of the book when more is revealed.

This is a standalone book made all the more captivating with its connections to the author of Dracula. It does not feel like Dacre took advantage of his ancestral connection but rather added authenticity to a story that expertly weaves fact with fiction, to create a novel that is thoroughly engrossing, and full of horror, evil, fear and trepidation. How secure will you feel walking alone at night after reading this?

I would highly recommend this book and I would like to thank Random House UK, Transworld Publishing and NetGalley for an ARC version of the book in return for an honest review.

Sh3llraiser (grumpybookgrrrl) says

This one is not doing anything for me. I love vampire books, but something in the writing and execution did not work for me. I didn't hate what I read, but I definitely didn't love it. It needed more historical fiction and more vampire mystique. It did have some of that "old school" vampirism - the mist and transformation, sleeping in the earth/soil, no reflection or footsteps, etc. I don't know. I just hoped for something a little different, maybe. Moving on...

Tammy says

This is a prequel, if you will, to the timeless novel Dracula with none other than Bram Stoker himself as the protagonist. Thankfully, these are not sparkly, shiny vampires. What we have here is a blood curdling tale that would make the Count proud. Elegantly written and atmospheric this novel drips with malevolence and oozes with the sinister.

Malina Skrobosinski says

"Won't you stay and play with me?"

Is there nothing that J.D. Barker touches that isn't purely sensational? If you read the author's notes, you'll find that this story bears truth. What Dacre Stoker and J.D. Barker have done here is tell a story that has been

long buried. These are events that Bram Stoker himself has stated to be factual. It's said that Dracula was never meant to be a work of fiction, but rather a warning... an ominous warning for all.

"The peculiarities of Ellen Crone. That is, of course, where I should start, for this is as much her story as it is mine, perhaps more so. This woman, this monster, this wraith, this friend, this... being."

In the prequel of Dracula, Dracul, we learn of young Bram Stoker and his family. We learn of the beginning, when the evil and the undead entered the Stoker family in the form of his nanny, Nanny Ellen Crone. From Bram's birth he was afflicted with an illness, one that was sure to be fatal, yet years go by and Bram is still with the Stoker family. It's very clear early in the novel that the beloved Nanny Ellen, while always endearing, is harboring many disturbing secrets. It's not until Bram takes a turn for the worse and is suddenly brought back from the brink of death that Bram and his older sister, Matilda begin to question exactly how Nanny Ellen may be involved. I have to be honest, at the young ages of seven and eight I found their inquisitive nature to remind me a lot of Colin and Mary from The Secret Garden. There was something very endearing about their relationship. It's soon clear to Bram and Matilda that Nanny Ellen is different, she is unholy. As the children begin to get closer to the truths of Nanny Ellen, she mysteriously leaves into the night.

Years pass, and the children have grown. While Nanny Ellen may have left them, she has never been far from their minds. The mysteries surrounding her, always rising to the surface of their thoughts. For Ellen, she too has never forgotten the children, always keeping a close eye on them. Protecting them from afar, because what they don't realize, something evil lurks about, something evil that wishes to do them all harm.

As the story unfolds, we learn of Ellen's tragic past, and why Dracula has been hunting her all these years. The Stoker family finds themselves caught up in a love triangle with grave consequences. While it may seem cliché, the heart wants what it wants. You can't force love.

Some could argue that for the time period the writing may appear too modern, but to heck with that. I for one appreciated that while Stoker and Barker kept many things factual for the time period, they told the story in such a way that would appeal to today's readers. The journal entries were enlightening and told the story... rather than offering ramblings that add nothing to the storyline as you might often see with older literature. Barker has a knack for epistolary novelization though, which is why I think Dacre made an excellent choice when selecting Barker as his co-author when writing this novel.

Let us consider that this is based on true events, given that, I found that the level of suspense was spot on. It wasn't over the top with fiction, it was terrifying at times because you could imagine living in that fear.

"The ring of a little bell came from my left, and I spun to meet the sound. I was faced with nine occupied beds. My eyes quickly followed the strings tied to the hand of each body to the little bell hanging above each bed, but none betrayed the stillness. Another bell sounded, this one behind me, and I spun yet again only to find more motionless beds, more bodies lying in wait. Another bell rang out at my right, then two more on my left, more yet behind me. Within moments, the room came alive with dozens of chimes, all ringing out louder and louder. I threw my hands upon my ears and spun in circles, for the sound grew horribly loud; bells, bells, all around."

For the time period, this would have been anyone's greatest fears inside a morgue without a doubt!

I could go on and on about how excellently written this novel is, but I'll stop, I think I've rambled on enough.

Do yourselves a favor and just read it already!

I want to thank NetGalley, Penguin Group Putnam, Dacre Stoker, and J.D. Barker for allowing me the opportunity to read this wonderfully written novel in exchange for my review.

Tiffany PSquared says

"Sometimes our deepest fears are the ones we keep closest to our hearts"

**Many thanks to NetGalley, Penguin Group/G.P. Putnam's Sons, and the authors for the opportunity to read and review an ARC of this book.

Remember in Friends when Rachel discovers Joey's copy of *The Shining* in his freezer? That's what I felt like resorting to while reading Dracul - only, I was reading it on my Kindle, and I don't think electronics like freezers too much.

This book was legitimately frightening in all the best ways! It doesn't even start you off slowly, you're immediately thrust into a dire situation with Bram Stoker trying to outlast one night in the midst of sinister forces who prove to be unrelenting.

Toward the end of the book, the action is so fast-paced and the enemies so numerous, you...well, you want to put the book in the freezer!

Dacre Stoker (Bram's great-grandnephew) & J.D. Barker (of The Fourth Monkey) write this epistolary origin story (of sorts) detailing Bram Stoker's eerie experiences with his nanny, Ellen Crone, which eventually lead to his first encounter with *the tall man*, who would, in fact, turn out to be Count Dracula himself.

Let's just pause for a moment and appreciate the name Dacre Stoker. Who wouldn't want to read a horror novel by a dude named Dacre Stoker? You kind of *have* to!

OK, back on point...

The story is fiercely personal, told through the letters and journals of Bram, his sister and brother, and a colleague who helps them pursue the fearsome Count. It is a new story told about an ancient horror and I thirstily devoured every page! Dracul reads like a movie playing in my head with vivid imagery and precise (but not exhaustive) mood-setting.

I recommend this book to fans of the original book Dracula and even if you've only ever seen the movie, this book's descriptive prose will instantly transport your imagination back to the 1800s with stuttering lanterns, rolling fog, and things that go bump in the night.

Dracul releases October 2, 2018 - just in time for Halloween - so make sure you add this one your TBR!

Will Byrnes says

“It is believed that the strongest of them can assume any form, be it bat, wolf, swirling mist, even human. They can appear young, old, or any age between. Some can manipulate the elements, producing fog, storms, crashing thunder. Their motives remain unknown, but one thing is clear: they leave a trail of death in their wake, thinking no more of a human life than we would the life of a fly.”

Dacre Stoker knows a thing or two about vampires, Dracula in particular, given that his great-grand-uncle was none other than Bram Stoker. Dacre has had non-literary careers of his own, but for a while now has picked up the family business and been writing, not only about his illustrious ancestor, but (with some assistance from writing partners) fiction relating to you know who. He wrote a sequel to Dracula a few years back, incorporating Bram as a character. This time he has written a prequel.

Bram - image from GotIreland.com

We spend time with Bram Stoker at age seven, a sickly child since birth. (as was the real Bram), but with a particularly interesting nanny, one Ellen Crone. (the actual name of the Stoker nanny) She does not eat with the family, preferring to dine alone. But she is very caring toward the Stoker children, most particularly Bram. The family summons a medical relation when Bram seems to be getting worse. But the application of leeches is not what Bram needs. Ellen has a better idea, and takes care of him. Soon after, he begins a true recovery, bounding from sickly child to a very active one. Shame about that scabby itch on his arm though. Young Bram and his sister, Matilda, sink their teeth into this mystery and engage in a bit of field research.

Dacre Stoker and friends - Image from ValeOfGlamorgan.com

Part of the fun of this book is seeing the usually pretty clear lines between the real Bram's novel and Dacre's prequel. Where did the notion of Dracula originate? How about Van Helsing? Damsels in distress? (or were they maybe enjoying themselves a bit too much for Victorian mores?)

Dacre has a lot of original material from which to draw, Bram's, at least what has not been lost to the sands of time (or maybe preserved in a coffin somewhere for safe keeping). Dacre has also written non-fiction books about his esteemed ancestor, and had a bit of a road-show, *Stoker on Stoker*, in which he lectured about Bram and his book.

Another fun element, for me anyway, was the opportunity looking into this book offered to dig up some dirt on the real Bram. The one piece of intel that I found most amazing was that when Bram first submitted his manuscript, it was as a work of **non-fiction**. Because of tender sensibilities at the time about a relatively recent bout of wide scale mortality, it was thought better to present it as fiction. In doing that, the first 101 pages of Bram's manuscript vanished like a sated bloodsucker on a foggy night. I have put some fun materials in EXTRA STUFF if you are irresistibly drawn to diving down those rabbit holes.

The 1922 German Nosferatu – image from Smithsonian Magazine

So, the story of *Dracul*, sick boy and sis try to find out what the real deal is with the beloved, if decidedly odd, nanny. (Fortune may have blown her into the Stoker family's life, but no, she did not arrive on the East Wind) There are times when she looks quite young. Others when she seems rather aged. Dacre brings in an old Irish (Stoker was born and raised in Ireland) legend, about a failed love that turns gruesome. The tale of the Dearg-Due is used to wonderful, and meaningful effect.

There are two timelines. We open with adult Bram in a castle-like place trying to keep a monster of certain sort locked in a room. Problem is that the various substances he is using to keep the thing from escaping are running out, and there is a real question of whether the aid he is expecting will arrive in time. This contemporary (1868) piece includes the tale of Bram, his family, and others, (including a pre-Van Helsing) trying to track down people, follow clues, and do justice against dark foes. The other line is Bram and his sister, Matilda, as young sibs, with scant understanding of what they have seen, attempting to figure it out. Both lines were fun, although I am not sure there would be many children of the ages portrayed who would be quite so resourceful, even in the mid-19th century. Feel free to suspend your disbelief and let it hang by its toes from the ceiling, as it stares at you with red, hungry eyes.

Bela Lugosi defined Dracula for a generation - Image from Smithsonian Magazine

In keeping with great-grand-uncle's form, Dacre tells the story through several sources. *The Journal of Bram Stoker*, *Letters from Matilda to Ellen Crone*, and *The Diary of Thornley Stoker* are the primary views. There is also *The Notes of Arminius Vambery*, a patient case record, and a few sections that are pure omniscient narrator. All of it made me bare my teeth, in a good way.

Dacre adds some nice interpretations of the rules of vampirism, what works, what doesn't, what their limitations might be. They can change into what? And eye-color shifting, some telepathy, an interesting item on the separated parts of the undead. There are plenty of classic vampire tropes, and for the big guy himself, a reminder of his Carpathian rep for how he disposed of his enemies. Dacre tosses in a few refs to relevant lit of the era, a bit of E.A.Poe, *The Woman in White*, one or two more. The book closes with a lovely reference, a name that will be familiar. There were also some pretty nifty plot twists, that worked well.

Gripes? Well, I mentioned the age-vs-competence thing. No big whoop, really. I confess to occasionally getting an image in my tiny mind of Velma, Daphne, Fred, Shaggy, and a certain pooch, when the adult crew was deciding on a dime to dash to this or that place to pursue the latest clue. I am not saying that I minded this. In fact, it contributed to the fun aspect of the book. But some might not enjoy what seems a bit of lightness in what is supposed to be a horror story. A horror story is supposed to be scary, right? Measured in hours of sleep lost, perhaps, or alarming dreams that jolt one awake. But no, not for me. Take that with a grain of garlic salt, though. I tend to be a fair bit less sensitive to horror than many readers. So it is entirely possible that this is a fairly scary book and I just didn't notice.

But really, this is such an enjoyable read. And that is the bottom line here. It was truly fun reading *Dracul*. I enjoyed as much the learning it sparked, about Bram in particular. Whether you are type O, A, B, or AB, whether you are positive, negative, or undecided, I strongly urge you to swoop in and see what *you* can dig up, as you flap along with this fast-paced, engaging and very entertaining book.

Review posted – 9/17/18

Publication date – 10/2/18

Paramount Pictures has acquired screen rights to *Dracul*, but it may be a few years before anything is done with it.

I received the e-book from Penguin-Random House's First to Read program. I did not have to consume or surrender any bodily fluids to get it.

PS - It was my intention to have a particular bit of fun with this review. Losing time this week to an out-of-town trip and some other non-review-related activities made incorporating that on time for the usual deadline, or undeadline in this case, more than I could manage. If I can, I will try to get that completed by Halloween. None of this STUFF alters my core review of the book, which is what you see above. - 10/30/18 - So sorry, it was not meant to be. If I find myself with some extra days at some point I might have a go at this, in time for Halloween 2019.

=====EXTRA STUFF

Links to the author's personal, Twitter and FB pages

The author's site link is actually to *Bram Stoker – Official Website for the Bram Stoker Estate*. Definitely check this one out. There are a lot of fascinating material and useful links.

Items of Interest

-----Northern Life Magazine Dacre Stoker on the mysteries behind the writing of Dracula - by Mark Davis – 18 July 2017

----- Dacre Stoker, author of "Dracula: The Un-Dead" - Interview with Don Smith – definitely worthwhile

-----Irish Faerie Folk of Yore and Yesterday: The Dearg-Due

- by Kim

-----The Guardian - The Icelandic Dracula: Bram Stoker's vampire takes a second bite - by Colin Fleming – April 19, 2017

-----Smithsonian - Why Does Dracula Wear a Tuxedo? The Origins of Bram Stoker's Timeless Vampire - by Jimmy Stamp. October 31, 2012

Scarlett Readz and Runz....Through Novel Time & Distance says

"She was there at my beginning, and will no doubt be there for my end, as I was for hers. This was, and always shall be, our dance."

-Dacre Stoker & J.D. Barker

Descend into the dark reality and fictional world of the man who wrote the original Dracula. An account of diary entries by Bram Stoker himself, woven into a fictional plot that has created this stunning prequel.

"What does that say?"

"The Dead travel fast"

Welcome to Dracul

"...for the devil claims their soul, and the gates of Heaven are forever closed to their ranks, as their final test requires them to renounce God and embrace all that is unholy."

-Dacre Stoker & J.D. Barker

Bram was born in Clontarf, Ireland near Dublin on November 8, 1847 during the time of famine and disease. Ill and very sickly, he spent his first years of childhood upstairs at Artane tower, where he was cared for by Ellen Crone. She was in need of a home and was welcomed by the family to help with chores and aid in the care of Bram.

During a time when bloodletting and laudanum were the doctor's only options to care for mysterious illnesses, Ellen was the one that spent the most time with Bram. Alone...behind closed doors, she always made him better.

Riding waves of high fevers and leeches gorging on Bram's blood till they almost burst, he was often incoherent of what was happening to him or around him. So what was it that she did that made young Bram recover every time?

"Nanna Ellen's finger came away red with blood: my blood. "Do you trust me?" she said. I forced a nod, unable to speak. 'You shouldn't," she replied."

-Dacre Stoker & J.D. Barker

Mrs. Stoker had her hands full caring for the younger siblings Thornley 9, Thomas 5, and infant Richard. Matilda, the only sister was a year younger and adored Nanna Ellen too.

It is 1854, and the beginning of an unforgettable autumn. Despite his confinements, Bram spends a lot of time with his sister Matilda too. He never ventures out or has dinners downstairs with the family, but it only took two words that would change all of that:

"Buried Alive"

Nanna Ellen keeps disappearing for days on end sometimes. Her sickly appearance after each healing of Bram, looking flaccid and ghostly with red glowing eyes, changed only for her to return with no pattern at all, rosy cheeked and back to herself.

After the siblings make a discovery in Ellen's room and follow her out into the night, the two of them have no idea what deadly quest they've just begun. From Ellen leading them into secret places to her disappearance into the fog never to return, they are left with too many clues difficult to forget.

Time jump /Bram Stoker Diary Notes:

"I will gut you from groin to gullet and dance in your ruins as the blood bubbles from your lips if you do not open this door!"

-Dacre Stoker & J.D. Barker

There is a monster outside the door and the stench of death and decay is seeping through. Wolves howling and prowling outside, voices inside tantalizing with his mind. How much longer will the garlic paste keep the door sealed before this being will break through? How many more crosses can the hold? Hours and hours go by, he uses all methods of his recollection to keep monsters away but slowly he seems defeated....mocking laughter is torturing from behind the door.

“You’re getting careless, Bram. You forgot to bless your flower; must be the fatigue setting in.”

- Dacre Stoker & J.D. Barker

Back in time:

The siblings have grown and laid their childhood memories to rest, until Matilda sees a woman on the streets of Paris that looks just like Ellen Crone...but unaged and younger looking. Can this be? As Bram still prefers to forget, Matilda makes some investigations and presents him with newspaper articles about a mysterious death. A lead they will follow that will take them traveling all the way through Germany.

At this point the novel switches back and forth to the scene of Bram keeping out the monster and the continuation of the storyline as some other characters enter the novel, enriching the riddling and terrifying quest from the other end. It commences in a crescendo as they learn about the legend of Dracul and realize their own connection to the legend.

“You are at my home deep within the Carpathian Mountains....”

- Dacre Stoker & J.D. Barker

I loved this novel from the beginning. A prequel that is equal its original predecessor and written by no other than the great grandnephew Dacre Stoker of Bram Stoker himself with the influence and experience of the talented J.D. Barker. The book that will be in my top 3 books of the year and an amazing addition to my Dracula collection.

As it has been said in previous reviews, according to the afterword in the book, it is confirmed that the original manuscript for Dracula begins at page 102, crossed out at the top and renumbered as page 1, the first one hundred and one pages missing. Research and cross referencing of those missing pages became the basis of this prequel. As the authors describe, the process seemed eery at times, as if Bram himself was looking over their shoulder.

I liked the way the novel was laid out between different timelines, each adding more dimension to the plot. For most of my reading my heartrate was elevated and I was unable to put the book down. Not expecting anything, I just let the story lead me through the twisty landscape and moments till the end seemed to seemingly fit perfect to the beginning of the original.

This book will be high on the popularity list with all those Dacula fans (ME). Without going overboard in the horror, it offers the perfect amount of hair raising old class scare and I am already ready to read it again. I appreciated everything tying in historically in reference to the German Walpurgisnacht (**Wal·pur·gis·nacht /väl?po?or?is?näKht**) and other bits of information. And one day I shall visit Walachia!

As a little cookie for the reader, the novel ends with the following message from the diary:

“End Him”

Latitude 47

Longitude 25.75’

Happy reading everyone! ?

I purchased a signed hardcover of this novel and received a digital copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange of an honest review. All opinions are my own. Thank you.

For further reading, here are some interesting links I came across:

www.bramstokerestate.com/LOST-JOURNAL...

www.bramstoker.org/links.html

www.bramstokerestate.com/Presenting_D...

Jennifer Gaarder says

Read my reviews at <http://www.jenchaosreviews.com>

Dracul

By Dacre Stoker and J.D. Barker

G.P. Putnam, October 2, 2018

497 Pages, Hardcover Edition

Review:

A mystery into a woman whose background is as strange as it is, well, mysterious. Complete with twists and turns, the reader does not find out about the woman who the trio-Bram, Matilda and Thornley Stoker call Nanna Ellen or Ellen Crone, until about 80% of the book. One will not meet the real villain, the real antagonist of the whole story until well after the middle of the book.

A child beset with a terrible illness that left him bedridden for most of his young life, Bram Stoker was left with no options in life-or at least he thought. Having a physician for an uncle was not enough to keep the illness at bay. He would continue to get sick and feverish, landing him in bed for days, if not weeks at a time. Ellen Crone, or Nanna Ellen, would be the only one that could help him, and no one knew how.

Suddenly, he was cured. After fighting for his life, entering death's door, Ellen brought him back. He was living and breathing with no illness coursing his veins.

After they discovered, from searching her room one day and found newspaper clippings, that many people were being killed in brutal and bloody ways, they became suspicious. Ellen had been leaving for as long as they could remember for days at a time. Was she involved with these killings?

Suddenly she disappeared.

Fifteen years later, Matilda, Bram's sister, saw her in Paris. Ellen had not aged a day, and Matilda tried to get to her. However, Ellen vanished without a trace.

Through negotiations with Bram and their older brother Thornley, they were convinced that it was high time they thoroughly investigated the roots of Ellen Crone and found her.

Thornley had problems of his own, however. His wife was very ill, be it physical or mental he was not sure.

Being a medical doctor specializing in psychiatric medicine, Thornley was convinced she was mentally affected. However, he would later find out, this was not the case.

It is during the investigation process throughout several hundred pages, alternating POV's and timelines, that we as readers finally find out who Ellen Crone is and how she came to be. We also meet a Doctor Vambery of the Hellfire Club, who is versed in Vampires and the Undead.

This book is written in a series of journal entries from Bram, Matilda, Thornley and Doctor Vambery. Bram's entries are from the "past". The storyline that is NOT a journal entry is that of the current day and the hours leading up to the final "showdown. This could be confusing to readers who did not read this as slowly as I did, digesting the material in a way that made this book make sense.

One, current day Bram is in a tower behind a closed door holding back a creature of the night which is trying desperately to get to him. What or who it is he does not know. He knows he cannot go to sleep for it will come in and devour him. Two, "past" Bram is the one who is investigating and finding Ellen Crone and her minions. He describes with fluency the emotions and visions of the woman as he is fused with her mind. It is explained why he is merged with her mind at one point in the book at about 50%.

Matilda writes letters to Ellen, and they are part of the book as well. These are interspersed with the chapters and are filled with questions that are then answered in later chapters. Her journal entries discuss feelings about Bram and the findings in the investigation. She is bright and aware. I have to say she is a strong female in this story.

Thornley's entries discuss his feelings about his wife's condition and his concerns for his brother Bram and his sister Matilda. He is a doctor, a scientist and a nonbeliever in things supernatural.

Dr. Vambery is a typical vampire hunter. He does not trust the undead in the sense of the statement. His journal entries discuss his distrust for Bram and Ellen Crone. He also explains his fear of the master vampire. If you have read vampire or monster hunting novels before, then you know that vampire hunters are ruthless killers and have no patience for the undead regardless if the undead is "harmless."

Writing:

This was not written in older English like the original Dracula. This had a balance if narration to dialogue and was very good. I was pleased with the wordplay and the use of crafty sentences and imagery.

Plot:

Written in journal form, this was more like a story. I did not see this the same way I saw Cloud Atlas, a very confusing and troubling book. The entries were seamless and kept the story going. They strung together in a way that there was no hesitation or stops. The book was not linear in that it did not follow along one trail of the storyline. One would have to read this very slowly to understand the background of all of the characters involved. I did this to absorb the book entirely. It was probably one of the better prequels written by a different author than that of a classic. Typically, these are not good. However, this one is surprisingly so.

What I Liked:

I liked the build-up to the showdown. It was not a rushed story, and one could feel the development of a woman who was most misunderstood for centuries. It was a heartwrenching story, and I did not see many of the things coming, which is good. I thought the book was about Bram Stoker. It is not. It is also not about Dracula, believe it or not. As you read along, you find its about someone else entirely despite the title of the book.

What I Didn't Like:

Vampire lore has been in the British Isles for centuries. At the time Bram and his siblings were investigating Ellen Crone and the other master vampire, they never once, in fifteen years suspected vampirism. They seemed very ignorant of vampires completely. This surprised me because at that time, in Ireland, vampires were greatly feared as were all undead and demonic spirits. It seemed rather silly that they never suspected this to be the case despite the mounting evidence before them.

Overall Impression:

This is an excellent book. However, because the trio, Matilda, Thornley and Bram Stoker were so ignorant to vampire lore, I had to deduct a point. I didn't see that as plausible in a village of Ireland that would surely have folklore surrounding undead creatures of the night. However, the writing was superb, the plot was solid, and I never saw the end coming. The epilogue, however, leads to Dracula. I was pleased with that. The ending of the original tale of Dracul was surprising and unpredictable.

Kylie D says

An intriguing gothic horror book, told from the point of view of several members of the Stoker family, including Bram, as well as his sister and brother. It tells the tale of Bram's childhood, where he was very sickly, on the verge of death, through to his adulthood. Bram had a nanny named Ellen when he was a boy, she seemed a bit of a creepy character, disappearing for days at a time, and sleeping in a box of dirt. Yet she seems to have healed Bram's ailments when the doctors of the time couldn't. Bram and his sister followed Ellen at one stage, just after he got well again, just to find a box in a tower of a ruined castle, containing a severed arm, among other things. They then watch Ellen disappear into a bog! Ellen then disappears from the children's lives, just to re-appear years later to them, however, she doesn't seem to have aged a day!

I found this book to hold much interest. It didn't go too hard core into the horror, concentrating more on the psychological aspect, but it hooks you in. It slowly reveals the story of Bram and how he comes across the famous Dracul, or Dracula. It is fiction, but told in biographical style, through journals and letters. The author, Dacre Stoker, is the great-grandnephew of Bram. This chilling tale has much to recommend it.

My thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Marialyce says

4 creepiness factor stars

My reviews can be seen here: <https://yayareadslotsofbooks.wordpress...>

"Even immortals have their beginnings."

Talk about a perfect Halloween book! This one had it all vampires galore, unsuspecting victims, and an atmospheric persona that would frighten anyone. Make sure if you embark upon Dracul you have the lights on, you are not alone, and you are ready to tackle the monsters conjured up in this prequel to the novel, Dracula, written in 1897 by the Irish author Bram Stoker. The original book set the scene for the many Gothic horror books and movies that followed.

This terrifying book, written by the great grand nephew of Bram Stoker and J.D. Barker used the writings and notes of Dacre's great uncle, Bram, to amass a story of how and where this legend began. Some believed

it to be a story of Vlad the Impaler, a Romanian, who got his name because of his favorite method of execution. Delightful man! However, Bram seemed to believe that Dracula was not just a figment of his mind but possibly a reality. As if vampires are not scary enough in your mind, imagine if they were real!

This book not only reveals the Count but also takes a look at Bram and his connection as well as that of his family to a woman named Ellen Crone. She is the care provider for the children and as Bram had been a sickly child, Ellen seem to provide solace, comfort and perhaps something else.

Strange murders have occurred in a nearby town, the ones where lots of blood was shed, and Bram and his sister, Matilda, are intrigued. They notice that Ellen seems strange, her behavior odd, and there is something perhaps a bit sinister about her. Bram feels it, he senses her, he hears her speaking to him even when she is not around. Who or what is Ellen? Then, Ellen disappears and when years later she is spotted in Paris by Matilda, seemingly not having aged a day, the search is on for answers. The answers they unearth, (no pun intended), are frightening and lead this crew on a fearsome chase finding not only Ellen but Dracul as well.

Written with a very high scare factor, this book will definitely creep the reader out. It has everything that ramps up the scare factor and makes the reader cringe and shudder. Not only were there vampires but there were snakes (eek!) and cockroaches (double eek!) too! This story if not for the faint of heart, but for those who enjoy a book that chills, terrorizes, and petrifies its audience, this one just might be for you!

<https://nypost.com/2018/10/06/bram-st...>

Thanks going out to Drace Stoker, J.D. Barker, G.P. Putnam's Sons, and Edelweiss for a copy of this very creepy book.

Phrynne says

What a perfect choice this book was to read on Halloween! Delightfully spooky, frequently gruesome and in parts really scary!

Amazingly Dracul is a prequel to the famous Dracula and as such it is perfect. It tells of the young Bram Stoker and his siblings growing up and the impact that their rather unusual nanny has on their young lives. Bram in particular has a very close relationship with her and this leads to events which culminate in their meeting with Dracula. Along the way there are deaths, graveyard scenes, amputated limbs and people consuming live mice among other gory details. As I said , perfect reading for Halloween.

I found this book to be well written and intriguing in its ideas. It was well paced and sometimes very tense. Who would not be a little nervous when there is a vampire outside causing deadly snakes to multiply and crawl in through your windows. Very enjoyable indeed and highly recommended:)

Mackey says

It's Horror Week here at Goodreads, and what better way to start it off than by reading a seriously chilling tale? **Dracul** will have you hiding under the covers and wishing for morning light!

I practically learned to read by devouring horror books and there simply was no better horror story than Dracula. For decades writers have attempted to recreate the image of Dracula or to write "sequels" about the Count. All fell miserably short of success - until now. Dracul, written in tandem by Drace Stoker, the great-grandnephew of Bram Stoker, and J.D. Barker, a master storyteller, is based on Stoker's original papers kept within the family until now. When Dracula was first published, the first 100 or so pages were cut from the printing. The foundation of Dracul lies within those pages and in the notes made by Stoker. For those of us who are huge fans of Bram Stoker, this work is a dream come true!

The story is set in Ireland and features a young Bram Stoker as the primary character. As a child he was sickly and often bedridden. The family had a beloved Nanny, Ellen Crone, who was able to care for young Stoker and bring him back, literally, from the brink of death. Suspicious deaths in the village, however, are eerily linked to Nanny Crone and suddenly she vanishes without a word or a trace. Years later, Bram and his siblings, rediscover their nanny but she brings with her a horror they never imagined. It turns out that Nanny Crone is a Dearg-Due, a bloodsucking being of Irish folklore. Be still my Celtic heart! As if tower crawling snakes was not enough, we have Celtic tales of fright as well!

To say that I adore Barker and his writing is understatement. He can captivate the reader like no other and Dracul, clearly, is no exception. The gothic feel of the prose resonates throughout the book and the suspense builds to the point of sheer terror that will have you shivering with trepidation and dread! And no, don't even reach for that light, because Dearg-Dues can walk in the sun! Oh yeah! It is a superbly told tale of fright! I truly did not believe it was possible for any book to come close the brilliance of Dracula but these two men have proven me wrong. Dracul is a classic in the making and one that you will not want to miss reading - not on your life.

There was no other book that I wanted to review more in 2018 than Dracul and I am forever grateful to Drace Stoker, J.D. Barker, @Edelweiss and G.P Putnam's Sons for making it possible.

?Brithanie Faith? says

5/5 stars ?????

Going into this I wasn't sure what to expect, but at the halfway point I said to myself; "Without a doubt, Dracul is going to become a new favorite of mine!", and I was not wrong in assuming as much!

Being the prequel to Dracula (which I have yet to read) I had reasonably high hopes that this would be a story that I would end up fully engrossed in, that would leave me wanting more, and I do! It has given me the motivation to finally go out and get my hands on a copy of the much loved classic to read for myself later this fall!

I've loved gothic/historical fiction for as long as I can remember, and this is definitely an example of one that's been done *right!*

Mixing fact with fiction, Dracul takes pieces of Bram Stokers life (as the world knows it), and fills the gaps with this chilling tale of how Dracula (the novel) came to be.

I was able to get my hands on an e-arc of this through Edelweiss, but it comes out in just a few short weeks, and I would *highly* recommend giving it a shot if you're interested! (I know I'll be purchasing a physical copy as soon as I am physically able!) ?

Matt says

There are surely many who have wondered where Bram Stoker got his idea for *Dracula*. After creating an interesting sequel to his ancestor's popular book, Dacre Stoker decided to team up with J.D. Barker to pen this prequel of sorts, though its exploration is less of Prince/Count Dracula than of a younger Bram Stoker. It is here that the seeds of all things ghoulish germinated, or so the reader is led to believe. Bram Stoker was quite a sickly child, being bedridden for the first number of years of his life. The family's nanny, Nanna Ellen, did all that she could to help, though caring for many children kept her occupied. It was only when Bram's uncle came to bleed him with leeches that things took an interesting turn. At that time, Nanna Ellen also visited her young charge and, by all of Bram's accounts, undertook a unique form of medicinal care through a small bite along his arm. Soon thereafter, Bram was healed, though to everyone it was thought that the leeches did the job. Upwardly mobile, Bram and his sister, Matilda, begin exploring their environs in the Irish countryside, which includes a closer examination of Nanna Ellen. What they discover serves to shock and concern them, for she acts in such a unique manner. When she disappears one day, Bram and Matilda can only surmise that something extremely mysterious is going on and they might have witnessed a key that relates to her disappearance. Moving forward more than a dozen years, Bram and Matilda are again witnesses to some odd happenings, both related to their nanny and some other folks from the town. Could the mysteries they uncovered as children be back again, in new and curious forms? As they press to understand what is going on, they discover the world of vampires and the un-dead, a realm that is highly dangerous for adults and children alike. However, nothing has prepared them for what is to come, or the residue it will have on their lives. Contrasted nicely with a more 'modern' Bram Stoker, who struggles with some additional demons, Dacre Stoker and J.D. Barker instil a significant chill into the narrative that is perfect for fans of the *Dracula* novel. Highly recommended, especially during the haunting month of October, when ghosts and ghouls begin to emerge!

I was so very excited to learn of this book and awaited its publication so that I could add it to my October holiday reading list. I have some experience with Barker's work and have come to admire Dacre Stoker, as he penned that aforementioned sequel to the extremely popular *Dracula*. Now, it's time to look back and allow these two authors to paint some interesting pictures for the reader, taking their own liberties with Bram Stoker and his life, though they make clear that some of their story is based on his writings and early journals. The authors handle Bram Stoker in a very interesting light here, even more interestingly than Dacre did his ancestor in the *Dracula* sequel. Bram is seen not only as a precocious young boy, but one who is driven to understanding the mysteries of the world, particularly when oddities pop up around him. The reader will see his progression throughout the story, both in the 'journal format' and in his elder form, where he surely undergoes many events that shaped him before writing his novel about the prince from Transylvania. The attentive reader will see this progression and the crumbs of information in this text that relate to the best

known work, utilizing many interesting themes and ideas. Many of the other characters, who play strong roles as well as minor narrative flavouring, must also receive great recognition, as their presence keeps the reader enthralled until the final pages. The narrative is wonderfully strong and filled with nuggets of wonderful speculation which, through to the authors' note at the end, can be left to hang in the air, wondering how much was real. Dacre Stoker and J.D. Barker dispel much of the fiction versus fact in their note at the end, as well as exploring how much of *Dracula* itself was based on real happenings, as opposed to a fictional account of a monster from history. While the use of journals and clippings may not be to everyone's liking, it serves a wonderful purpose and is a true adage to Bram's original work, deserving praise for that writing format. At this time of ghouls and monsters, this story hit the spot and will surely make it onto my annual reading list.

Kudos, Messrs. Stoker and Barker, for such an intense story. I am eager to see if you two will work together again, as this was surely a strong collaborative effort.

This books fulfils Topic #6: A Book About the Current Equinox, for the Equinox #5 Reading Challenge.

Love/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:

<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

A Book for All Seasons, a different sort of Book Challenge: [https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/...](https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/)
