



PENGUIN ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 3

# Carmilla

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu



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Retold by Jane Rollason

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**Pearson Education Limited**  
Edinburgh Gate, Harlow,  
Essex CM20 2JE, England  
and Associated Companies throughout the world.

ISBN: 978-1-4082-6122-4

This edition published 2011

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4

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Illustrations by David Belmonte

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Set in 11/13pt A. Garamond  
Printed in China  
SWTC/03

Produced for the Publishers by Red Paper Design

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# Contents

	Activities 1	iv
Chapter 1	A Bad Dream	1
	Activities 2	10
Chapter 2	A Beautiful Guest	12
	Activities 3	24
Chapter 3	A Bloody Nightdress	26
	Activities 4	36
Chapter 4	An Illness with No Name	38
	Activities 5	48
Chapter 5	A Slow Death	50
	Activities 6	60
Chapter 6	A Bath of Blood	62
	Talk about it	72
	Write about it	73
	Project: The Vampire News	74

1.1 What's the book about?

- 1 Look at the picture on the cover of the book. What kind of story do you think this is? What usually happens in these stories?
- 2 These words are used in Chapter 1. Check their meanings at the bottom of pages 1–9. Then put the right forms of the words in the story.

candle	carriage	castle	countess	ghost
needle	priest	servant	to shock	terror

**A knock at the door**

The big wooden doors of the lonely <sup>a</sup>..... were always shut. A <sup>b</sup>..... lived there. This important lady had two <sup>c</sup>..... . She was afraid of <sup>d</sup>....., so the night servant sat in her room all night. A <sup>e</sup>..... always burned on a table. One night, while the servant was mending a white nightdress, a man arrived at the castle in a small <sup>f</sup>..... . When he knocked at the door, the sudden noise <sup>g</sup>..... the three ladies inside. The night servant's <sup>h</sup>..... went into her finger and she screamed. As she jumped up, the nightdress covered her head. The countess thought that she was seeing a ghost. She died of <sup>i</sup>..... . The night servant ran out of the room, and didn't see the sleepy day servant on the stairs. The day servant fell down the stairs and died immediately. The night servant ran to a window and looked out. The stranger was a <sup>j</sup>..... – and she knew him! Thirty years earlier, they planned to marry, but the young man's parents wanted their son to join the church. Seeing him again now the night servant died of shock.

'There's nobody home,' thought the priest, and he drove away.

1.2 What happens first?

Look at the words in *italics> and the picture opposite. Tick (✓) your answers.*

- 1 The story-teller is going to
  - a  tell a frightening story.
  - b  describe a visit from a new friend.
- 2 The story-teller lives
  - a  in a lonely village by the sea.
  - b  in a lonely castle in a forest.



# A Bad Dream

*'Something new came into my life that night – terror.  
And it still lives with me now.'*

**M**y name is Laura and I live in a **castle**. The castle is in a lonely place in Styria, in Austria. My family is not an important family, but we are not poor either. My father is English, and I have an English name, but I have never been to England. My father worked for many years for the Austrian government, but he is getting old now. When he left his job, he bought this castle and some of the land around it.

As I say, it is a lonely place. The castle stands on high ground in the middle of thick forest. A very old and narrow road passes in front of the castle gates. On one side of the castle is a steep bridge over a little river. The river runs off into the dark shadows of the forest.

The castle is built of grey stone and has tall windows all along the front. There are lovely gardens and a small church to the side of the castle. It is very pretty.



**castle** /'kɑ:səl/ (n) a very large, strong building that protects people from attack

The nearest village is two hours' drive away. Well, that is not quite true. There *is* a village only half an hour away, but nobody lives there. It has a small church, but the church has no roof. There, in the church, lie the **graves** of the Karnstein family. There are no more Karnsteins today, and their great castle, behind the church, is falling down. The village houses are all empty too. Later in my story, you will learn the reason why.

My story begins when I was a young child. Then, as now, I lived in the castle with my father, the kindest man on earth. My mother, a Styrian lady, died soon after I was born. A Swiss woman, Madame\* Perrodon, was employed to look after me. Her round, smiling face was always at my side, and she ate with my father and me. Another, younger lady, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine, lived with us. She was my teacher, and she also joined us for dinner. Madame Perrodon spoke French and a little English, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine spoke French and German. My father and I spoke English too. Visitors laughed at all the languages at our dinner table.



**grave** /grev/ (n) a place where a person's body is put after their death

\* *Madame, Mademoiselle*: the French words for *Mrs* (or *madam*) and *Miss*



I have one terrible memory from when I was a child. I have never forgotten it because my life changed that night. I will *never* forget it. It may seem unimportant to you now, but it plays a part in my story.

I was six years old. My bedroom then was on the top floor of the castle, under a steep roof. One night, I woke up suddenly. I looked around the room for Madame Perrodon. She was not there, but I was not frightened. I knew nothing of **ghosts** and **monsters** in those days. When a dying **candle** made strange shadows on the bedroom wall, to me it was pretty. But I was unhappy because I was alone. I began to cry.

Suddenly, I stopped in surprise. There was someone next to my bed – a lovely young lady with a serious face. She touched me softly with her hands and lay next to me on the bed. Then she pulled me towards her, smiling. I felt warm and happy, and fell deeply asleep. In my sleep I felt two sharp **needles** go deep into my neck. I woke and cried loudly. The lady moved back. She kept her eyes on me, and then quickly disappeared under the bed.



**ghost** /gəʊst/ (n) the part of a person that lives after death. *Ghostly* places are visited by ghosts.  
**monster** /'mɒnstə/ (n) a large, frightening living thing in stories  
**candle** /'kændl/ (n) something that was burned for light, before electricity  
**needle** /'ni:dl/ (n) something thin, sharp and made of metal. You use a *needle* and cotton when you are joining two pieces of cloth.



Now I was frightened. I cried out again. I screamed. Madame Perrodon, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine and two **servants** ran into the room.

They listened to my story and held my hand.

'It was nothing, my dear child,' they said.

But it was not nothing, and they knew it. Their faces were pale and worried as they searched the room. They looked under the bed and in the cupboards. Madame Perrodon spoke quietly to a servant, but I heard her words.

'Feel the bed here – someone *was* here,' she said. 'The place is still warm.'

They looked at my neck, but they found nothing there. Madame Perrodon, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine and one of the servants stayed in my room all night. From that time, until I was about fourteen, there was always a servant there with me. Something new came into my life that night – **terror**. And it still lives with me now.

The next morning, my father came to visit me in my room. He sat on my bed and kissed me. He made jokes and laughed with Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine.

'Do not be frightened,' he said to me. 'It was just a bad dream. Nothing is going to hurt you.'

'It was only me,' said Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. 'I lay next to you on the bed. You were half dreaming and you did not see me clearly.'

But I knew that it was not a dream. I knew that the woman was not Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. And I was very frightened.

The doctor came. He was pale and old, and he looked more ill than me. He gave me some medicine and of course I hated it.

Later that day, I had another visitor. An old **priest** came into my room with Madame Perrodon. His hair was white and he wore black clothes. He had a sweet, kind face. He spoke quietly. I listened and remembered his words. And from that time, I often repeated them at my bedside, before I went to sleep.

Twelve years passed after that terrible night and the bad dream did not return. I lived a quiet life. It was an easy life too. Most of the time, I did what I wanted. I learned my lessons, I went for long walks and I read books. There were a few girls of my age in the area. I visited them sometimes, or they visited me.

Now I will tell you a very strange story. You will find it hard to believe. But it is true. I was there.

One sweet summer evening, my father and I went for a long walk. Some visitors were coming the next day, but my father had some bad news.

**servant** /'sɜ:vənt/ (n) a person who works for a family and lives in their house

**terror** /'terə/ (n) a feeling of being very frightened. Some children are *terrified* of the dark.

**priest** /'pri:st/ (n) an officer of the church

‘General Spielsdorf cannot visit us until later in the year,’ he said.

‘Oh, but I want to meet Bertha! She is exactly my age and I have never met her!’ I said.

The General had no children of his own. Bertha was his sister’s daughter. When his sister died, Bertha moved into the General’s house. Her visit was an important day for me. Perhaps it does not sound exciting to you, but I lived a very quiet life in the country.

‘When are they coming?’ I asked.

‘The General is not coming until the autumn. But I am very glad that you and Bertha never met.’

‘How can you say that!’ I said, surprised. ‘You know that I have thought about this visit for weeks!’

‘Because the poor young lady is dead,’ he said sadly.

I was very **shocked**. My father showed me the General’s letter.

‘I am afraid the General is very unhappy. He says in his letter that he is going crazy,’ said my father.

We sat down under some beautiful old trees near the river. The sun was beginning to go down and its bright reds and yellows shone in the water.

I read the letter and my eyes filled with tears.

*I have lost my dearest girl. Bertha was my sister’s child, but she was like my own daughter. She was in danger and I had no idea. Now I know everything, and it is too late. A monster was in our house and she has killed my child. I was stupid! I am only glad that Bertha knew nothing of the reason for her terrible suffering. She knew she was ill, but not why. For the rest of my days on this earth, I will search for that terrible monster. There is almost no light to guide me. I cannot write or talk sensibly – I am going crazy. Perhaps in the autumn, if I am still alive, I will see you.*

*Your friend, Roland Spielsdorf*

The sun was now disappearing behind the trees, and we were still far from home. We talked about the General’s strange letter as we walked slowly along the road.

When we were close to the castle, we saw Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. They were coming down the road to meet us.

The view was lovely in the moonlight. To the left of our castle, the narrow road disappears into the forest. To the right it crosses a bridge over the river and then climbs up steeply into more trees. Dark shadows fall across the road there. That night, the moon lit up the river. There was no sweeter picture. It felt sad too, because I was still thinking about the General’s shocking news.

**general** /dʒenərəl/ (n) a very important officer who gives orders to his soldiers  
**shocked** /ʃɒkt/ (adj) very surprised, usually by bad news. A murder of an old lady, for example, is a *shocking* crime.

‘Bright moonlight can do strange things to people,’ said Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. ‘Some people have bad dreams, other people feel nervous ... some people even go crazy.’

We walked along slowly. After a silence, my father spoke.

‘I have a bad feeling tonight,’ he said. ‘I feel that some great danger is hanging over us ...’

Just then, we heard the sound of horses and **carriage** wheels on the road, arriving at high speed. They came suddenly, over the bridge. Two men on



**carriage** /'kærɪdʒ/ (n) a vehicle pulled by horses. People travelled in carriages in the days before cars.



horses arrived first, followed by a team of four carriage horses. They were racing along the road too fast. Loud, high screams came from the carriage window. We watched in terror, stepping back from the road. When the carriage horses reached a large tree by the road, they turned sharply.

I knew what was coming. I shut my eyes and covered my ears with my hands. The ladies and the horses screamed, the men shouted. There was a terrible crashing noise.

I opened my eyes. Two horses were on the ground, and the carriage was on





its side with two wheels in the air. The wheels were going round and round.

As the wheels slowed down, a well-dressed lady climbed out of the carriage. A younger lady was lifted out by some of the men and put down on the grass. She was not moving. My dear old father ran to the girl and felt her wrist. Then he looked at the older lady.

‘She is alive,’ he said.

The lady smiled and looked up to the sky in thanks.

She was a good-looking woman for her age. She was tall but not thin, and was dressed in fine black clothes. She was clearly an important person, perhaps a **countess**. Her skin was pale but her face was very proud. Suddenly, her smile disappeared.

‘Why do these things happen to me?’ she cried. ‘I am on a journey of life and death – an hour may make the difference – and now my daughter cannot travel. Who knows how long she must rest for? I must leave her. I cannot wait – I *must* not wait. How far, kind sir – can you tell me? – is the nearest village? I must leave her there. I will not see my dear girl, or hear of her, until my return in three months’ time!’

I pulled my father’s coat.

‘Father!’ I said in his ear. ‘Please invite her to stay with us. Please! We have so many pretty bedrooms in the castle but nobody ever sleeps in them!’

‘Madame,’ my father said to the lady, ‘we will be very pleased if you leave your daughter with us. Please do not worry about her. Madame Perrodon and my daughter will look after her. She is welcome to stay with us for as long as necessary.’

‘Sir,’ she said, ‘you are very kind, but I cannot accept your invitation. You do not know us. It is too good of you.’

‘Madame,’ he said, ‘the nearest village on the road to the east is a long way away and has no suitable hotel. And, as you say, a long journey will be too dangerous for your daughter’s health. My daughter will be very happy to make friends with her. In fact, she was waiting for a friend who is now, sadly, unable to visit.’

The carriage was now back on its wheels. The horses were calm and back in their places.

The lady looked at her daughter – a strangely cold look, I thought. Then she called my father to her. They walked away from our group. The lady’s face was very serious as she spoke to my father quietly for two or three minutes. He did not seem to notice the change in her. What was she saying? I could hear nothing of the conversation.

The lady returned to her daughter’s side, spoke quickly in her ear and kissed

**countess** /ˈkaʊntəs/ (n) a title for a very important and, usually, rich lady with a large family home. In many European countries, a countess is the wife of a count.

her goodbye. Then she jumped into the carriage and the door was closed. The carriage drove away at high speed, with the two horsemen behind it.



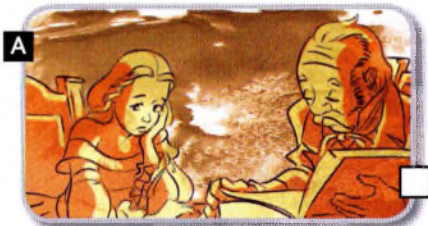
**2.1 Were you right?**

Look back at your answers to Activity 1.2 on page iv. Then put these sentences in the right order (1–7).

- a  A carriage has a terrible accident.
- b  A young lady visits Laura in a dream.
- c  For the next eight years, Laura never sleeps alone in her room.
- d  Laura isn't frightened of anything.
- e  Laura's father receives a letter from his friend, General Spielsdorf.
- f  Laura's mother dies.
- g  The dream frightens Laura very much.

**2.2 What more did you learn?**

Match the pictures with possible words of the speakers.



- 1 'I felt two sharp needles – here!'
- 2 'Then I will accept your very kind offer.'
- 3 'Our life is so quiet! I can't wait for Bertha's visit.'
- 4 'The General's news is very bad. Bertha is dead.'
- 5 'I can't look!'



## 2.3 Language in use

Read the sentences on the right.

My story **begins** when I **was** a young child. Then, as now, I **lived** in the castle with my father.

1 Complete the sentences below, from the story, with the right forms of the verbs.

My father <sup>a</sup> ..... is ..... (be) English, and I <sup>b</sup> ..... (have) an English name, but I <sup>c</sup> ..... never ..... (be) to England. My father <sup>d</sup> ..... (work) for many years for the Austrian government, but he <sup>e</sup> ..... (get) old now. When he <sup>f</sup> ..... (leave) his job, he <sup>g</sup> ..... (buy) this castle and some of the land around it.

2 Make questions for these answers.

a .....?

Because her father is English.

b .....?

No, she hasn't been there.

c .....?

When he left his job.

## 2.4 What happens next?

1 What do you think will happen in Chapter 2? Tick (✓) the boxes.

- a  The young lady's mother will return in three months' time.
- b  The young lady will die.
- c  Laura and the young lady will become best friends.
- d  Laura will discover that she knows the young lady already.
- e  The young lady will tell Laura that the older woman is not her mother.
- f  Laura will wake up and it will all be a dream.

2 Write answers to these questions.

a You are Laura. How do you feel about your new guest?

.....

b Have you ever had a surprise guest? What happened?

.....



## A Beautiful Guest

*‘There were some things about my new friend that I did not like. She refused to tell me anything about herself, her mother, her history or her life.’*

We watched the carriage disappear into the dark forest. The sound of horses and wheels died away in the night air. The silence returned.

It felt like a dream, except for the young lady. She still lay on the grass. After a few minutes, she opened her eyes.

‘Where is Mama?’ she asked, in a very sweet voice. She turned her face to us. We all saw how lovely she was.

She had many questions. ‘Where am I? What is this place? I cannot see the carriage. And Matska, my nurse – where is she?’

‘We will answer all your questions when you are feeling a little better,’ said Madame Perrodon kindly. ‘You are safe with us.’

Then the young lady remembered the crash. She was happy that nobody was hurt. ‘But Mama?’ she asked again. ‘Where is she?’

‘Your mother has left you with us,’ explained Madame Perrodon. ‘She had to continue her journey. She will be back soon ... quite soon.’

‘In three months’ time,’ said my father honestly, and at that news the girl cried.

Madame Perrodon put an arm around her. She was able to stand by now and we walked through the castle gates. My father sent a servant on horseback to find the doctor. He sent other servants upstairs to make a bedroom ready for our new and interesting guest.

That evening, when the young lady was safely in bed, we drank tea in the large sitting-room at the front of the castle. It has four tall windows that look down to the gates. We were all thinking about the evening’s adventure.

‘Did you notice a third woman in the carriage?’ asked Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. ‘I saw her when the carriage was put back on its wheels. She did not get out after the accident.’

‘No,’ we all said.

‘She was an ugly old woman,’ said Mademoiselle De Lafontaine, ‘and she wore a strange red cloth on her head. She watched the young lady and her mother through the carriage window, with an **evil** smile. Her eyeballs were red and her teeth were black.’

‘Perhaps that was Matska – the nurse that the young lady asked about,’ I said. ‘But she does not sound like a nurse.’

‘And did you see the servants?’ asked Madame Perrodon. ‘Their faces were ugly and pale, and their clothes were old and dirty.’

‘Yes,’ said my father, ‘they were evil-looking men. I hope they did not rob the poor lady in the forest. But I must say that they were clever too. They repaired the carriage and caught the horses in a minute.’

‘I am sure the young lady will tell us all about it tomorrow,’ said Madame Perrodon.

‘I do not think she will,’ said my father, with a strange smile.

What did he mean? I waited to be alone with him. After the two ladies went upstairs to bed, I began to question him.

‘Tell me everything, Father. What did the lady say to you?’

‘She said, “My daughter is weak and nervous after a long illness. But she is not crazy.”’

‘Why did she say that?’ I said. ‘She did not need to say it. How strange!’

My father continued his report. ‘She then said, “I am making a long and difficult journey. It is very important and highly secret. I will return for my child in three months’ time. While I am away, she will tell you nothing about us. Please do not ask her who we are. Do not ask her where we come from. Do not ask her where I am travelling.” And that is all she said! She left so quickly. Were we wrong to offer the girl a home?’

‘Oh no, Father,’ I said. ‘I am very excited. I feel that this evening has changed our lives for ever!’

‘I hope you are right, Laura,’ said my father.

The doctor finally arrived at one o’clock in the morning. My father and I waited in the sitting-room while he visited the patient.

After half an hour, the doctor came back downstairs.

‘Your young guest is sitting up and she is perfectly well,’ he said. ‘She is a little shocked, but she is not hurt. You can visit her now, Laura, but just for a few minutes. She would love to see you.’

I ran upstairs.

Our guest was in one of our best bedrooms. There were rich red covers on the bed and chairs, and fine pictures on the walls. The furniture was dark and old.

She sat up in the large bed. She looked very pretty in the candlelight, but there was also something strange about her.

‘My dear—,’ I started to speak, but then I stopped. I stepped back from her. Why did I stop, you are thinking? I will tell you.

Her face was the face from my dream. It was the face that visited me so often at night. And when I saw that face, I felt terror!



We were silent for more than a minute, and then she smiled.

‘How wonderful!’ she said. Her smile became softer. ‘Twelve years ago, I saw your face in a dream. It has lived in my memory since that night.’

‘Yes, wonderful,’ I repeated slowly. I was fighting my terror. ‘Twelve years ago, *I* saw *you*. I could not forget your face. It has stayed in *my* memory since that night.’

Then I remembered that she was a guest in our castle.

‘Welcome to our home,’ I said to her. ‘I am very sorry about your accident. But I am very happy that you are here.’





She smiled and took my hand in hers. Her face did not seem strange now. It was pretty and intelligent.

‘I must tell you about my dream,’ she said. ‘I was a child of about six. I found myself in a strange, dark room, full of furniture. I thought the bed was empty. I thought I was alone in the room. I decided to hide under a chair. Then I heard crying. I looked out from under the chair and I saw you in bed. You were exactly as I see you now. You were a beautiful young lady, with gold hair and large blue eyes. I climbed onto the bed and put my arms around you. You stopped crying and we both fell asleep. Suddenly, you sat up and screamed. I



was terrified, and I hid under the bed. Then I woke up and I was at home, in my own bed. I have never forgotten your lovely face. You are the lady that I saw.'

I now told her *my* dream. She could not believe it.

'I am a little afraid of you,' I said.

'You are so pretty that I am not afraid of you,' she said. 'Last time we met, twelve years ago, I was a child. Now we are both young ladies. I feel that we are already friends. And I have never had a friend.'

What were my feelings towards her? They are hard to describe. Yes, I wanted to be her friend. But I also wanted to run away from her. She seemed to hold my heart in her hands. And she was so beautiful and so strange.

She suddenly looked very tired, and I said goodnight.

'I will call a servant,' I said, on my way to the door. 'You will not want to be alone tonight.'

'You are kind,' she said. 'But I cannot sleep with a servant in the room. I have a great fear of robbers. Our house was robbed once and two of our servants were murdered. I always lock my door.'

She called me back, held me close in her pretty arms and spoke softly in my ear.

'Goodnight, my new friend,' she said. 'It is very hard to see you go. Tomorrow, I will see you again, but not early. I never get up before midday.'

She came down the next afternoon at about one o'clock, and asked for a cup of chocolate. In daylight, she was just as beautiful. I will describe her to you. She was tall and thin. She moved lazily – very lazily – because she was still a little weak from her long illness. But she was not ill now. In fact, she was full of life. She had a very fine face, with a small, pretty nose. Her skin was a healthy rose colour and her mouth was very red. Her eyes were large and dark, and they shone brightly. But best of all was her hair. I loved her wonderful, thick hair. It was fine and soft, and a rich dark brown. There was a touch of gold in it too. Later, I often lifted it off her shoulders to feel the weight of it. I feel sick when I think of that now.

There were some things about my new friend that I did not like. She refused to tell me anything about herself, her mother, her history or her life. I promised to tell nobody, but I could get only the simplest facts from her. I learned only three things:

First – her name was Carmilla.

Second – her family was very old and very important.

Third – her home lay in the west.

'Please forgive me,' she said. 'That is all that I can say. I would like to tell you everything.'

‘Tell me, then!’ I said.

‘One day soon, after my mother returns, I promise I will answer all your questions.’

Sometimes, she put her arms around my neck. She spoke sweetly in my ear and held me tightly. But her words made no sense.

‘I feel so close to you,’ she said. ‘One day, you will feel close to other people too. You will taste that wonderful feeling. It is not evil, it is love. For now, please do not ask about me.’

What was she talking about? I did not like having her arms around me and I tried to get away. But her voice was like music and I almost fell asleep. I did not like her at these times. I felt excited, but I was also afraid. I loved her and I hated her. There is no other way that I can explain my feelings then.

Sometimes, her eyes became cold and narrow.

‘You are mine, you *will* be mine. You and I are one for ever,’ she said, like an angry lover.

‘What do you mean by all this?’ I asked her. ‘Am I like somebody that you love? Please do not say these things – I hate it.’

She dropped my hand and turned away.

I could not understand her at these times. Perhaps she was crazy. Perhaps she was a boy, dressed as a girl. There were stories like that in old books, but I did not really believe it.

At other times, we were ordinary friends. We talked about silly things, we laughed, we sat in silence. But even then, when I looked at her suddenly ... sometimes her eyes were following me closely.

Her way of living was strange to country people like us. She stayed in her room all morning, and never came downstairs before one o’clock. She then drank a cup of chocolate, but ate nothing. When we went for a walk, she quickly became tired. Her body was always lazy and sleepy, while her mind was quick and intelligent. She told me about many different people and places. She described many adventures to me.

One afternoon, we were sitting under some trees in the forest. A **funeral** came past us. It was the funeral of a pretty young girl from a lonely house in the woods. Her poor father, a forester, walked behind his dead child. She was his only child and he looked heart-broken. Villagers walked in a line behind him. They wore their best clothes and the men carried their hats in their hands. They sang a sad, sweet song.

I stood up and joined in the singing. My friend shook me roughly. I turned, surprised.

**funeral** /ˈfjuːnərəl/ (n) a meeting of friends and family, often in a religious place, to remember the life of a dead person

‘What a terrible noise you are all making,’ she said, holding her hands over her ears.

‘I do not agree. I think it is very sweet,’ I said unhappily. ‘Please speak more quietly or they will hear you.’

I began to sing again.

‘I hate funerals,’ she said. ‘Everyone must die. Everyone is happier when they *do*. Let’s go home.’

‘She is the poor girl who saw a ghost two weeks ago. My father told me about her. She fell ill then and now she is dead.’





‘Do not speak to me about ghosts,’ said Carmilla. ‘Or I shall not sleep tonight.’

‘A terrible illness has arrived in the area,’ I said. ‘A young farmer’s wife died a week ago. Something attacked her in the night, she said. She was quite well before that, but she died a few days later.’

‘I hope they have had *her* funeral,’ said Carmilla. She took my hand and pulled me back. ‘Sit down here, next to me.’ She pressed my hand hard.

I looked at her face and I was terrified. Her body was shaking. She closed her mouth and held my hand tightly. Looking down at the ground, she made





a long, low sound, like an animal. It was a cry of suffering. And then, finally, she was quiet.

'I am all right now,' she said, a smile returning to her face. 'That is what funeral music does to me. Now I am better.'

All the way home, she joked and laughed.

I only saw her angry one other time.

We were playing cards by the tall windows in the sitting-room one afternoon. A man – a traveller – come through the castle gates. I knew him because he visited the castle twice a year with his dog. I loved playing with the little dog.

His back was rounded and he could not stand up straight. He had long black hair, long white teeth and a sharp face. He was always smiling from ear to ear. His coat was long, black and red, and he wore many belts across his body.



All kinds of strange things hung from these belts. There were bottles, knives and tools of all shapes and sizes. He carried a light on a stick in one hand and had two boxes under the other arm. When I was a child, I loved to look in the boxes. In each one there was a ‘monster’, made from parts of different dried animals. His little dog ran at his feet. Usually the dog loved to come into the castle. But this time, the dog refused to walk through the castle gates. It sat outside and made a terrible crying noise.

‘What is wrong with the dog?’ I said to Carmilla. She did not answer.

The servants all came out of the castle to watch the traveller. We opened the windows and watched from above.

When the traveller saw us, he took off his hat. He put down his stick and boxes. He played us a dance and sang a silly song. The servants all laughed. I laughed too.





‘What can I interest you in, ladies?’ he called up in terrible French. ‘I hear there are **vampires** in this area. People are dying everywhere I go. I have something here ... one minute.’ He reached deep into one of his pockets. ‘How about a lucky **charm**?’

He held up us his lucky charms. They were pretty things, with strange signs and pictures all over them.



**vampire** /ˈvæmpaɪə/ (n) a person who continues to live after death. *Vampires* drink people's blood and sleep in graves.

**charm** /tʃɑ:m/ (n) a special thing that protects its owner



‘These charms never fail,’ he said. ‘They keep vampires and other monsters away at night. Just put one next to your head when you sleep. Then you will sleep like a baby and nobody will visit you in the night.’

Carmilla bought one immediately, and I did too.

He looked up at us with his clever black eyes. He seemed to see something that interested him. Then he took out a package from another of his pockets. Inside were a dentist’s tools.

‘Look, my lady,’ he said to me. ‘Silence, dog!’ he suddenly cried, turning to the animal at the gate. He turned back to me. ‘Excuse me, my lady. Your friend there has a sharp tooth. Long, thin and pointed like a needle.’ He laughed. ‘Perhaps it hurts the young lady. With my tools here, I can make it round and ...’

He stopped speaking and I looked at Carmilla.

‘Is the young lady angry?’ he asked. ‘Have I spoken too honestly?’

The young lady was looking *very* angry. She gave the poor man an evil look. Then she turned away from the window and went back into the room.

‘Where is your father?’ she cried. ‘He must punish this rude animal.’

I watched the traveller put his things away. He picked up his boxes and bags, and walked back to his dog.

‘Do not worry, Carmilla,’ I said. ‘He is leaving.’

Immediately, she smiled and was calm again.

That evening, my father returned home with the doctor. They brought news of a third mysterious illness in the village. A young girl described an attack to the doctor and now she was dying. It sounded exactly like the attack on the young farmer’s wife.

After dinner, the two men sat for some time in my father’s study. The door was closed. When they came out, my father was laughing.

‘But you are an intelligent man, my dear friend,’ he was saying to the doctor. ‘So, do you also believe in ghosts?’

The doctor smiled and shook his head. ‘But life and death are mysterious states,’ he said. ‘We really know little about them.’

They walked away and I heard nothing more. How did the conversation continue? I did not know then. But now I think I can guess.

3.1 Were you right?

Look back at your answers to Activity 2.4. Then use these words to complete this page from Laura's notebook.

accident	beautiful	Carmilla	describe	dream	friends
learned	like	question	strange	three	usually

I do not <sup>1</sup>..... have much to write at the end of the day  
 But I must <sup>2</sup>..... the excitement of the last twenty-four  
 hours! First, I <sup>3</sup>..... the sad news that Bertha was dead  
 Then there was a terrible <sup>4</sup>..... in front of our castle  
 Now a <sup>5</sup>..... young lady has come to stay with us. There  
 is something <sup>6</sup>..... about her. Her mother says we must  
 not <sup>7</sup>..... her. She has told us her name and her age, and  
 that is all! Her name is <sup>8</sup>..... Her mother will return  
 in <sup>9</sup>..... months' time, and we will learn more then. I  
 think we will be good <sup>10</sup>..... But there is one thing that  
 I do not <sup>11</sup>..... She is the young lady from my terrible  
<sup>12</sup>..... I don't know what to think about that.

3.2 What more did you learn?

1 Are these sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- a  Carmilla has never seen Laura's face before.
- b  She never gets up before midday.
- c  She eats a large meal at one o'clock.
- d  She gives no information about herself.
- e  She sometimes talks to Laura like a crazy, angry lover.
- f  When she sees the funeral, she seems to suffer.
- g  She is very angry when the traveller talks about her teeth.



2 Which of Carmilla's actions are usual, do you think? Which are strange? Discuss your answers.

3.3

### Language in use

Look at the sentence on the right. Then write *who*, *that* or *where* in the sentences below.

There were things about Carmilla **that** I did not like.  
She is the poor girl **who** saw a ghost two weeks ago.

- 1 Laura visits the room ..... Carmilla sleeps.
- 2 Hers was the face ..... visited me so often at night.
- 3 There were many questions ..... she refused to answer.
- 4 The villagers sang for the child ..... was dead.
- 5 The traveller had a little dog ..... I loved to play with.
- 6 He talked of places ..... vampires lived.
- 7 'Are you a man ..... believes in ghosts?' asked my father.
- 8 'Life and death are mysterious states ..... we know little about,' said the doctor.

3.4

### What happens next?

- 1 Read the first few lines of Chapter 3, below, and discuss the questions. What do you think?

*The next evening, we had another visitor at the castle. It was the picture cleaner, bringing back our paintings. He came from Gratz, our nearest city, a day's drive away.*

- a Why does everybody in the castle hurry to talk to the picture cleaner and his assistants?
  - b What kind of paintings do the owners of castles hang on their walls?
  - c Why is Laura surprised by the subject of one of the paintings?
- 2 Do you have a lucky charm? Why (not)? When do people sometimes use lucky charms?

Example: *When they are taking a driving test.*

- a .....
- b .....
- c .....

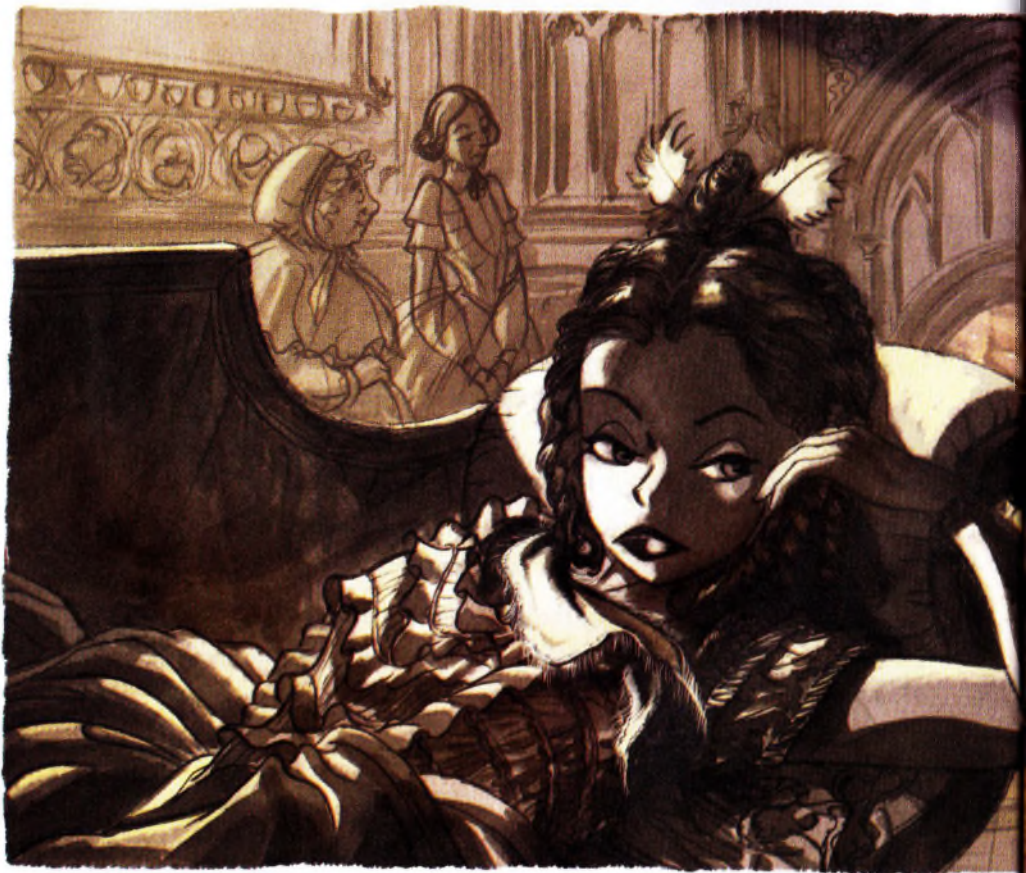


## A Bloody Nightdress

*Then something moved at the foot of the bed. At first I could not see what it was.  
But soon I saw that it was a black animal – like a monstrous cat.*

The next evening, we had another visitor at the castle. It was the picture cleaner, bringing back our paintings. He came from Gratz, our nearest city, a day's drive away. Everybody ran to the castle entrance to hear news from the wider world.

The picture cleaner's assistants brought in two large cases. They opened the cases and took the pictures out one by one. My father had a list of paintings in his hand. He read the numbers, and the picture cleaner produced each picture. Mostly they were from my mother's side of the family. I did not think they were very well painted.



‘These pictures were very dirty when they left us three months ago,’ my father explained to Carmilla. ‘They were black with age and smoke, and you could not see the subjects of the paintings. We are really seeing some of them for the first time.’

Carmilla did not answer. She sat lazily on a sofa, showing no interest in the activity around her.

Then one of the pictures – small and square – caught my eye. In fact, it shocked me. The picture cleaner noticed my interest.

‘I am very pleased with this one,’ he said. ‘Look how bright the colours are!’

It was not the colours, but the subject that interested me. It was a picture of a young woman. At the bottom of the painting, it said, ‘Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, 1698’. You remember that my mother’s family were Karnsteins. The woman was quite beautiful. She seemed to be almost alive. She looked exactly like Carmilla!



‘Carmilla, look at this!’ I said. ‘Here you are in this picture. It is just like you! Is it not beautiful, Father? And see, Carmilla, even the colour of your hair is the same. Can I hang this in my room, Father?’

‘Yes, of course,’ said my father. ‘It is a very pretty picture. I am glad you like it.’ He laughed and moved on to the next picture.

Carmilla looked at me and smiled. It was not a pleasant smile.

‘I believe there were Karnsteins in *my* family too,’ said Carmilla slowly, ‘many hundreds of years ago. Are there any Karnsteins living now?’

‘I do not think there is anyone alive with the name Karnstein,’ I said. ‘Their family castle is very near here, but it has been empty for many years. The roof fell in long ago.’

‘How interesting,’ she said. ‘But look at the beautiful moon outside. Let’s take a walk down to the road and the river.’

She put her arm around me and we walked under the stars to the castle gates.

‘It is just like the night you arrived,’ I said.

Carmilla smiled. ‘You want to hang the picture of me in your room,’ she said. She rested her head on my shoulder. ‘Are you glad I came?’

‘Of course, Carmilla,’ I said. ‘I am very happy.’

She kissed me silently. I felt uncomfortable.

‘You are so romantic, Carmilla,’ I said. ‘I am sure you have been in love! Perhaps you are in love now?’

‘I have never loved anyone,’ she said quietly, ‘except you.’

Her body was shaking. She gave me a strange look, and then hid her face in my neck and hair. She made that low, animal sound.

I pulled away and looked at her face. Her eyes were strangely dead and her face was pale.

‘I live in you, my dear,’ she said. ‘I know you will die for me.’

‘Are you ill, Carmilla?’ I said, pushing her away. ‘Are you going to fall? Let’s go back inside. Come with me! I will get you some wine.’

‘I am a little cold. But let’s look at the moonlight for a minute. I may never see it with you again.’

Now I was worried. Was this the illness that killed the forester’s daughter and the young farmer’s wife?

‘We must call the doctor for you,’ I said.

We were back at the house now. Already her eyes were bright again and there was a little colour in her face.

‘You are very kind, but I feel quite well again. There is never anything wrong with me. Sometimes I feel a little weak. Suddenly I need to sit down for a short time. And then I am fine again.’



For the rest of the evening, there were no more of her strange looks and crazy talk. I was glad, because they frightened me.

We sat down to coffee and chocolate in the large sitting-room. We played cards with Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. After the game, my father brought in his cup of English tea and sat next to Carmilla on the sofa.

‘My dear, have you heard from your mother since you arrived?’ my father asked.

‘No,’ said Carmilla.

‘Do you know where I can write to her?’ he asked.

‘No,’ said Carmilla. ‘But I am thinking of leaving you. You have already been too kind to me. I would like to take a carriage tomorrow, and follow her. I know where I can find her, but I cannot tell you.’

‘Please, my dear,’ said my father, ‘do not think of leaving. Your mother placed you in our hands, and you must stay with us.’

‘Father, why do you want to write to Carmilla’s mother?’ I asked.

‘I am worried about the mysterious illness that is taking so many lives. I would like to discuss it with Carmilla’s mother. But if we cannot reach her, I will do my best. You must not leave us, Carmilla, until we hear from her.’

‘Thank you, sir,’ she said. ‘I would love to stay. I have never been so happy in my life before.’

He kissed her hand and she smiled sweetly.

I sat in Carmilla’s room that night as usual while she prepared for bed.

‘Do you think,’ I asked, ‘you will ever tell me your story?’

‘I cannot yet tell my story, even to you. But the time is very near when you will know everything.’ She lay on her bed, watching me. I saw tears in her eyes. ‘And then you must come with me to the grave.’

‘Carmilla!’ I cried. ‘You are talking wildly again, and I will say goodnight.’

‘You are right. I say silly things. Do not go yet. We will talk about something happy. Have you ever been to a dance?’ she asked quickly.

‘No,’ I said. ‘What is a dance like? It must be lovely.’

‘I have almost forgotten,’ she said. ‘I have not been to a dance for years.’

I laughed. ‘Your first dance cannot be very long ago! You are not older than me!’

‘Yes, you are right. I remember everything about the last dance that I went to. I have tried to forget it for a reason. I was almost killed that night.’

‘What?’ I said, shocked.

‘I was shot here with a gun as I lay in my bed,’ she said. She pointed to a place below her neck.

‘Did you really nearly die?’ I asked.

‘Yes, and that is why I am weak. Love can be strange. That love nearly took my life. Let’s go to sleep now,’ she said. ‘I feel so lazy. I cannot even get up and lock my door. Goodnight.’

‘What a mysterious girl and what a strange story!’ I thought. I hoped that her story was not true.

A candle burned on my bedside table and I soon fell asleep.

Like Carmilla, I locked my bedroom door each night now. I also looked under the bed before I got into it. But dreams come through stone walls and laugh at locked doors. They travel as they please.

I had a dream that night. I was lying in bed and I could see the room and its furniture, but it was very dark. Then something moved at the foot of the bed. At first I could not see what it was. But soon I saw that it was a black animal – like a monstrous cat. It walked from the door to the window and back, and back again. I was terrified, but I could not cry out. It walked faster and faster. The room became darker, until I could only see the cat’s bright yellow eyes. It jumped lightly onto the bed. The two eyes came close to my face, and suddenly I felt a sharp pain in my neck. The pain was like two needles pushing through my skin.

I screamed and woke up. The candle lit the room. I saw a woman at the foot of the bed. She wore a dark dress and her hair fell around her shoulders. She stood there, like a stone. Without moving, the woman suddenly changed her place in the room. She was nearer the door. She was next to the door. The door opened, and she disappeared.

I ran to the door. It was locked on the inside. I was afraid to open it. I was terrified. I jumped into my bed and pulled the bedclothes over my head. I did not move or sleep until morning.





My terror stayed after the sun came up. In fact, it became worse. I could not spend a minute alone the next day.

I did not tell my father. Why not, you ask?

‘Either he will laugh at me,’ I thought. ‘Or he will think I am ill. He will think I have the same mysterious illness as the forester’s daughter. I do not have that illness, and I do not want to worry him.’

I spent the morning with Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. I told them about my dream. Mademoiselle De Lafontaine laughed, but Madame Perrodon was worried.

‘Oh! I forgot to tell you,’ said Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. ‘You know the tree walk behind Carmilla’s bedroom. One of the gardeners has seen a ghost there! Martin walks up that way before the sun comes up. Twice now he



has seen a ghostly woman there. She was walking along the tree walk, both times!’

‘What a silly story!’ said Madame Perrodon, looking at me. ‘And this is not a good time to tell ghost stories!’

‘Martin did not think it was silly,’ said Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. ‘He was very frightened.’

‘You must not say a word about it to Carmilla,’ I said. ‘She can see the tree walk from her bedroom window and she is terrified of ghosts.’

Carmilla came downstairs later than usual that day. When we were alone, she immediately told me of a dream. She dreamed of a black shape, she said. It came around her bed, and she woke up in terror. Then, for a few seconds, she saw a dark man by the fireplace.

‘I was saved,’ she said, ‘by the lucky charm that we bought from that poor traveller. It was on the little table by my bed. When I saw the man, I felt for it with my hand. As I touched it, the man disappeared! I am sorry now that I was so rude to the traveller.’

‘Well, listen to me,’ I said.

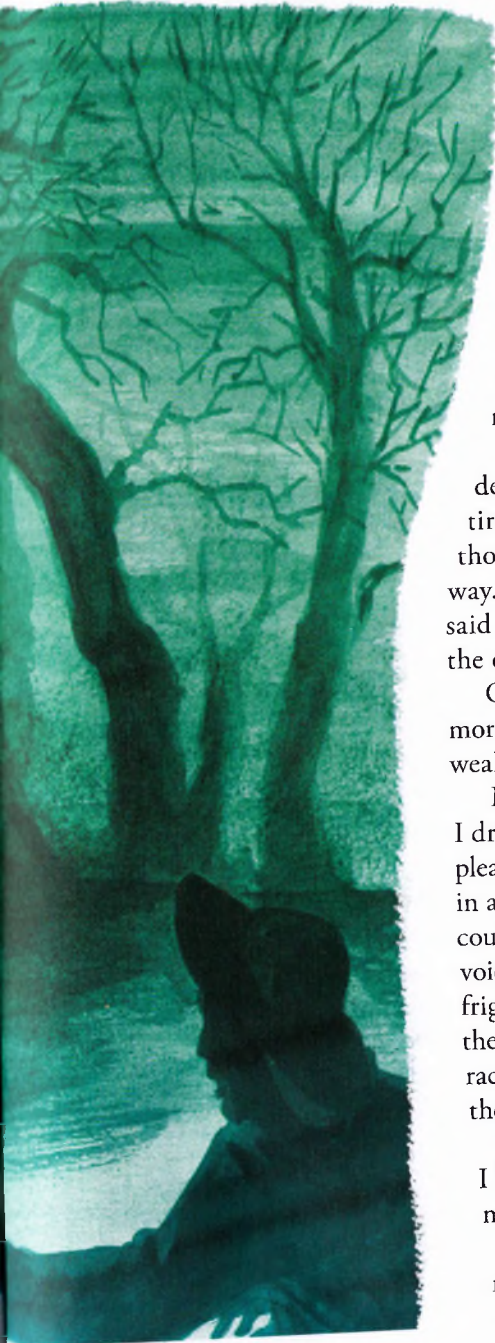
I then described *my* terrible dream. She was shocked by it.

‘Did you have your lucky charm?’ she asked.

‘No, I left it in the sitting-room,’ I said. ‘But I will have it with me tonight. If it worked for you, perhaps it will work for me.’

I cannot imagine now how I slept alone that night. I remember that I put the charm next to my bed. I fell asleep immediately, and slept very deeply. The next night was the same. When I woke, I felt tired and sad. But, strangely, it was





almost a pleasant feeling.

'You see!' said Carmilla, the next afternoon. 'I told you. I wore the charm around my neck and I slept beautifully too. I believe that it keeps all evil away.'

'How do you think the charm works?' I asked.

'I think he has poured some plant oils on it,' she said. 'The oils protect you from these illnesses that fly around the air. The illnesses try to get into your body, but the smells from the charm stop them. It is quite natural, but it works!'

For five or six more nights, I slept deeply. But every morning I felt even more tired. My mind and body felt heavy. I thought often about dying, but in a sad, sweet way. I was changing, but I could not stop it. I said nothing to my father and I did not ask for the doctor.

Carmilla was always at my side. She talked more often of her wild love for me. As I became weaker, her feelings became stronger.

My dreams were a strange land. At times, I dreamed that I was walking up a river – a pleasant, cold feeling. At other times, I was in a very dark place. I spoke to people that I could not see. I often heard one clear female voice. This voice was very deep and slow and it frightened me. I felt kisses on my face. But when the kisses reached my neck, my heart began to race. I wanted to cry out, and I needed air. And then everything went black.

This strange state continued for three weeks. I became pale and there were dark rings around my eyes.

'Are you ill, my dear,' my father often asked me.

'I am quite well,' I always answered.

Why did I say that? Why did I not ask for his help? Perhaps because, in one sense, it was true. I was not in pain.

'It cannot be the mysterious illness from the village,' I thought. 'My illness is now three weeks old. The village girls and the young farmer's wife were only ill for a few days, and then they died.'

Carmilla was also suffering strange dreams and feelings. But she was not as ill as me. I did not understand why I was ill. I was living inside a dream world and I could not think sensibly.

One night, I heard a different voice in my dream. It was not the clear female voice that I usually heard. It was sweet, but also terrible.

'This is your mother,' it said. I did not know the voice, because I never knew my mother. 'Someone is trying to kill you. You must be careful.'

At exactly the same time, my candle suddenly burned brightly. I saw my room clearly. There, at the foot of my bed, I saw Carmilla. She wore her white nightdress, but from head to foot she was washed in blood. I woke up with a terrible scream. The next minute, I was standing outside my room, crying for help.

Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine arrived quickly.

'I have had a terrible dream,' I said. I described it to them. I could see in their faces that they understood my terror.

'Poor child!' said Madame Perrodon. 'Mademoiselle De LaFontaine, please bring a cover from Laura's bed. She is cold.'

Madame Perrodon put the cover around my shoulders.

'We must wake Carmilla,' I said. We went to her door and knocked loudly.

'Carmilla! Are you there?' I called. We all knocked. We screamed her name. It was enough to wake dead people in their graves. But there was no answer.

We tried to open the door. It was locked as usual. Now we were really frightened. We ran back to my room and rang for the servants. My father's bedroom was on the other side of the house, so he could not hear us. And nobody was brave enough to walk through the dark castle to his room.

The servants ran up the stairs. I ordered the men to kick open Carmilla's door.

We stood at the door of the room and held up our candles. We looked into the dark room, but we saw nothing. We called her name, but there was no answer.

Slowly we went into the room and looked around. Nothing was different from the evening before – except that Carmilla was not there.





**4.1 Were you right?**

Look back at your answers to Activity 3.4. Then tick (✓) the sentences below that are right. Put a cross (X) next to the sentences that are wrong.

- 1  An old painting of Countess Karnstein looks just like Carmilla.
- 2  Laura enjoys Carmilla's strange looks and talk of love.
- 3  Laura's father wants Carmilla to leave.
- 4  A black cat terrifies Laura in her dream.
- 5  A gardener has seen a ghostly woman in the castle garden.
- 6  Carmilla says that her lucky charm saved her from a man in her room.
- 7  Laura sees her mother's ghost, wearing a bloody nightdress.
- 8  Carmilla's bedroom door is locked, but she isn't there.

**4.2 What more did you learn?**

What is happening in each of these pictures? Write one or two sentences.



1 .....

.....

.....

.....

2 .....

.....

.....

.....

### 4.3 Language in use

Read the sentence in the box.  
Then make the sentences below into  
one sentence in the same way.

She lay on her bed, **watching** me.

- 1 It was the picture cleaner. He was bringing back our paintings.

.....  
 .....

- 2 She sat lazily on a sofa. She showed no interest in the activity around her.

.....  
 .....

- 3 'Are you ill, Carmilla?' I said. I pushed her away.

.....  
 .....

- 4 'What a silly story!' said Madame Perrodon. She was looking at me.

.....  
 .....

- 5 The next minute, I was standing outside my room. I was crying for help.

.....  
 .....

### 4.4 What happens next?

- 1 Read the chapter title and the sentences in *italics* at the top of the next page.

- a What is the 'illness with no name', do you think?  
 b What will Laura's father see on her neck?

- 2 Two servants are looking for Carmilla. They are in the garden, discussing the search. Continue their conversation.

**Martin:** *We've looked in the river and along the tree walk. Where shall we look next?*

**Sarah:** *We could look on the top floor of the house.*

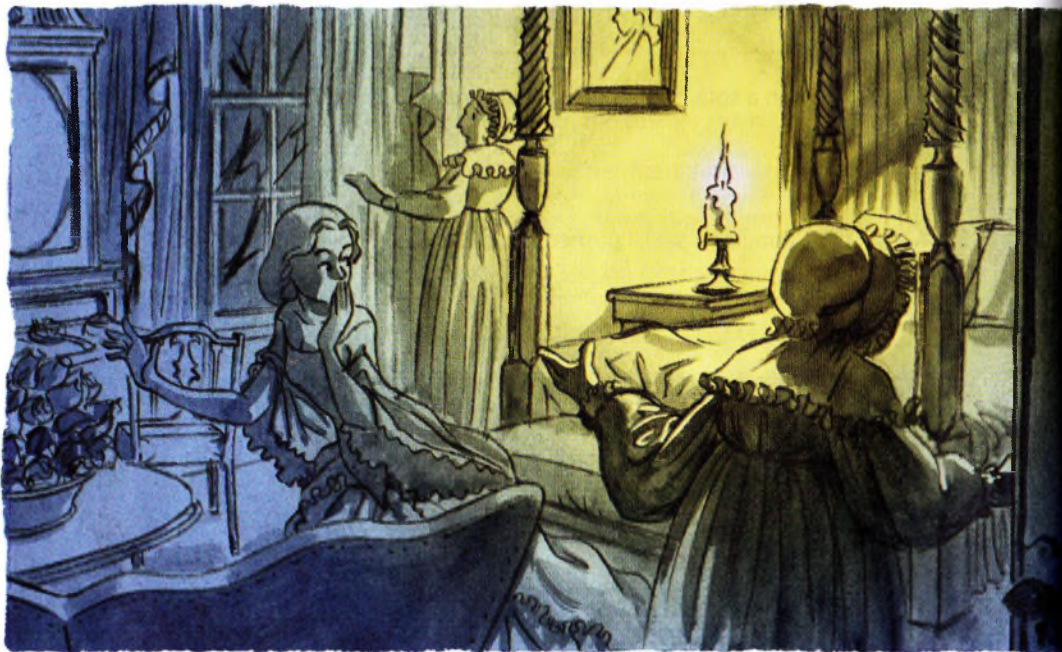
**Martin:** *What do you think of this Carmilla?*



## An Illness with No Name

*'Oh!' said my father as he pulled the neck of my dress down. 'You are right!' 'What is it?' I cried. I was beginning to feel frightened.*

There was nothing unusual in Carmilla's bedroom except for the broken door. We began to feel calmer and we sent the servants away.



'Perhaps the men frightened her when they broke down the door,' said Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. 'Perhaps she jumped out of bed and is hiding somewhere in the room.'

'Of course she could not come out while the men were here,' agreed Madame Perrodon. 'She is wearing her nightdress.'

We began our search again and we called Carmilla's name. There was no sign of her. We looked carefully at the windows, but they were shut.

'Carmilla!' I said. I was almost crying. 'If you are hiding, please come out now. It was a good joke, but that is enough.'

The room was silent. By now, I knew that she was not in the bedroom. The door of her little dressing room was locked on the bedroom side, so she was not in there either.

'What has happened?' I said to the others. 'I cannot understand it.'

Everything is locked. Nobody can get in. Nobody can get out. But she is not here! An old servant once talked about secret doors and secret rooms in the castle. Perhaps she has found one of those.'

It was now four o'clock in the morning. I decided to spend the rest of the night in Madame Perrodon's room.

When it was light, my father was told. Everybody in the house joined in the search. We looked in every corner of every room. We looked in every corner of the garden. Nothing! Carmilla could not be found.

'We must search the river,' my father said to the head gardener. 'And we must search the forest.'





My father's face was grey – he looked very old to me. Perhaps he was thinking about Carmilla's mother. How could he tell her the terrible news?

'Do not worry, Father,' I said. 'I am sure we will find her.'

But I did not believe it.

The search continued all morning. By one o'clock there was still no news, and my father and I were losing hope. I went upstairs to Carmilla's bedroom.

And there she was! She was standing in front of her mirror. I could not believe my eyes.

'Carmilla!' I cried.

She turned quickly and came towards me silently. She looked frightened.

I ran to the top of the stairs to call my father. Then I ran back to Carmilla and I kissed her and put my arms around her.

'Dear Carmilla!' I said. 'Where have you been? We have suffered terribly since you disappeared. How did you get back?'

'Last night was the strangest night,' she said.

'Please, Carmilla, you must tell me everything,' I said.

'I went to bed as usual last night,' she said. 'It was after two o'clock when I went to sleep. The bedroom door and the dressing room doors were locked on the inside. The windows were closed. I slept deeply and I do not remember any dreams. But I have just woken up on the sofa in my dressing room. How did I get in there? The doors were open. And look at the bedroom door! Someone has broken in! Did I sleep through all that noise? Usually the smallest noise wakes me up.'

By this time, my father, Madame Perrodon, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine and a number of servants were in the room. Everybody was very pleased to find Carmilla alive and well. They all asked questions at the same time. She answered them, but she had no new information.

My father walked up and down the room, thinking. I saw Carmilla looking strangely at him. What was she thinking? Perhaps she was afraid that he did not believe her story.

The servants went back to their work. Mademoiselle De Lafontaine went to find some medicine for Carmilla.

My father sat next to Carmilla on the sofa and took her hand.

'My dear,' he said, 'can I ask you a question?'

'Of course,' said Carmilla. 'But I cannot tell you anything more. I know nothing about last night. And please remember my mother's request. There are things that I cannot talk about.'

'My dear child,' said my father, 'I am not going to ask you about your life before you came here. But I think I have an idea about last night. Here is my question.'



Madame Perrodon and I waited nervously.

‘Have you ever walked in your sleep?’

‘No,’ said Carmilla. ‘Well, not since I was very young.’

‘Ah!’ said my father. ‘But you did walk in your sleep when you were young?’

‘Yes, I did,’ said Carmilla. ‘My old nurse, Matska, often told me about it.’

My father smiled.

‘Well, this is what has happened,’ he said. ‘You got up in your sleep and unlocked the door. You took the key with you and went into one of the twenty-five other rooms on this floor, or perhaps on the floor above – or downstairs. There are so many rooms and cupboards in this castle, and every room is full of furniture and boxes. We still had many rooms to search. I am not surprised that we did not find you!’

‘But, Father, how did she get to the sofa in the dressing room? We searched in here so carefully.’

‘She went in there when everybody was looking for her downstairs or in the garden. She left her hiding place while she was still asleep. Then she went through the bedroom to the dressing room and lay on the sofa. Suddenly, she woke up. We have solved the mystery!’ he said, laughing. ‘And without any robbers or ghosts or monsters!’

Carmilla looked beautiful. Her perfect skin was rose-coloured and her mouth was bright red. When my father looked at me, he probably noticed the difference. He stopped laughing and his face became serious.

‘Poor Laura is very pale,’ he said to Carmilla. ‘And you look so healthy.’

And so our worries ended, and Carmilla was back with her friends.

The next evening, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine offered to sleep in Carmilla’s room, but Carmilla refused. My father asked a servant to sleep on a chair outside the room.

The night passed quietly. In the morning, I was talking to Madame Perrodon in my bedroom when I saw someone at the castle gates. It was the doctor.

‘Dr Herzog is here,’ I said to Madame Perrodon. ‘Shall we call Carmilla? She will not be awake yet – it is too early for her.’

‘I think the doctor has come to see *you*, my dear,’ said Madame Perrodon. ‘Your father sent a servant for him yesterday.’

Madame Perrodon and I went down to the library. My father and the little doctor, with his white hair and glasses, were waiting there for me. He smiled when I came into the room. But then I came closer. When he saw the dark shadows under my eyes, his smile disappeared. He took me to one end of the room and we sat down together.

As I told my story, he grew very serious. I described the black shapes in my dreams, the feeling of sharp needles in my neck.

'You are very pale, my dear,' he said. 'You have lost your usual colour.'

'I feel weak,' I explained, 'but I do not feel ill. I am sure I can easily get stronger again.'

'When these sharp needles go into your neck, how do you feel?' the doctor asked.

'Very strange,' I said. 'I feel excited. I feel that I am trying to walk across a very fast-moving, ice-cold river.'

Dr Herzog sent me to wait with Madame Perrodon. He called my father to him.

Their conversation seemed heated. They spoke in low voices so we could not hear. My father looked pale and worried.

'Laura, dear,' my father said after a time. 'Come here for a minute.' As I came close, he took my hand in his. 'The doctor has a few more questions for you.'

'You talked about sharp needles in your neck,' said the doctor. 'Does your neck still hurt?'

'No,' I said.

'Where exactly did you feel these needles?' asked the doctor.

'Here,' I said, pointing to a place on my neck. My dress covered it.

'Do you mind if we look at it?' asked the doctor.

'Oh!' said my father as he pulled the neck of my dress down. 'You are right!'

'What is it?' I cried. I was beginning to feel frightened.

'My dear young lady,' said the doctor, 'there are just two very small blue circles. They are nothing! And now,' he continued, turning to my father, 'what shall we do?'

'Is there any danger?' I asked. My voice was shaking.

'I do not think so,' said the doctor. 'I am sure you will soon get better.'

Dr Herzog called Madame Perrodon to join us.

'Madame,' he said, 'my young friend is not well. Her illness is not serious, but we must look after her. Please do not leave Miss Laura alone for one minute. Not one minute!'

'But, Dr Herzog, what is wrong with her?' asked Madame Perrodon.

'I will explain later, Madame. And I know you will follow my orders.'

'Of course, Doctor,' said Madame Perrodon.

'As you know, another young lady is staying with us, Dr Herzog,' said my father. 'I think she is suffering from the same illness as my daughter. She seems



much stronger than Laura, but I would like you to look at her. She never comes downstairs until the afternoon. Perhaps you could have supper with us tonight, and then you can see her.'

'Yes, I will do that,' said the doctor. 'I will return at seven.'

The two men went outside together. They walked up and down between the castle gates and the road, deep in conversation.

Finally, the doctor left. I watched him jump up on his horse and ride away into the forest. At the same time, the postman arrived with a bag of letters.

My father returned to the library about half an hour later. He held a letter out to me.

'This letter has come from General Spielsdorf. It has taken more than a week



to reach us. He is on his way – he may arrive today or tomorrow.’

My father usually loved having guests, and he specially enjoyed the General’s company. He did not look pleased now. There was something on his mind.

‘Something is worrying you, Father,’ I said, ‘What is it?’

‘Everything is fine,’ he said.

His words said one thing; his face said another.

‘Father,’ I said, putting my hand on his arm. ‘Tell me this. Does the doctor think I am very ill?’

‘No, dear,’ he said. ‘He thinks you will soon be completely well again. You just need some rest. But the General is not coming at a good time. You are not well enough for guests.’

‘But what does Dr Herzog think is wrong with me?’ I asked.

‘Nothing. Do not ask me all these questions!’ he said.

I was surprised by the coldness of his words. But he did not mean to shout at me. When he saw my hurt face, he kissed me.

‘I will tell you in a day or two,’ he said. ‘Now, some good news. I am going on a visit to Karnstein, and you and Madame Perrodon are coming with me. The carriage will be ready at twelve. I have to see the priest there, and you can enjoy the pretty drive. When Carmilla comes down, she can follow with Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. Mademoiselle will bring some food, and we will have tea in the old Karnstein castle.’

We started our journey at midday, climbing over the steep bridge to the left of the castle. The road to Karnstein follows the hills, turning through beautiful, natural woods.



Coming around a sharp corner, we suddenly met our old friend General Spielsdorf. He was on horseback, with a servant riding behind him. An open carriage followed with the General's suitcases.



Both parties stopped, and the General climbed off his horse. After the usual greetings, the General joined us in our carriage. His servant and bags continued on the journey to our castle.

'It is ten months since we saw you, General,' said my father. 'How are you, dear friend?'

We did not really need to ask. We could see how the General was. He was a shadow of the man we knew. He was thinner and older, and his face told a terrible story. I remembered his letter with the news of Bertha's death. 'I am going crazy,' he wrote then. Now I believed him.

The General began to talk about losing Bertha. Clearly it was the only subject of any interest to him. He was an honest old soldier and he spoke freely. His angry feelings poured out of him.

'Evil has visited my house,' he said. 'The most monstrous evil has taken my dear child from me.'

'Please tell us what happened,' said my father. 'Or does it give you too much pain?'

'I will tell you,' said the General. 'But you will not believe me.'

'Why not?' asked my father.

'Because my story is monstrous and unreal. *I* only believe it because I have seen it with my own eyes.'

'Try me,' said my father. 'I am always open to new ideas. And if *you* believe it, that is good enough for me.'

The General looked through the carriage window into the dark forest. The blackness seemed to mirror his feelings. For a time, he was lost in thought. My father watched him. I tried to read my father's thoughts. Did he think the old man was crazy?

'So we are going to Karnstein Castle,' the General said. 'I am very interested in seeing it too. I planned to visit the castle during my stay with you. In fact, that is why I am here. There is a little old church that houses the graves of the dead Karnsteins. Am I right?'

'Yes, there is! Perhaps you plan to buy the old castle,' said my father, smiling. 'We can be neighbours!'

The General did not return his smile. He looked even more serious, as some terrible memory came into his mind.

'I have a very different plan,' he said. 'I plan to open the grave of one of those fine Karnsteins. I plan to pull out the monster inside it. When I have finished, honest people will be able to sleep quietly in their beds. I have strange things to tell you, my friend.'

My father looked at him with great interest.



‘The house of Karnstein is dead,’ said my father. ‘The last Karnstein died more than a hundred years ago. My dear wife was a relative of the family on her mother’s side. But nobody has the name Karnstein today. The castle walls have fallen down and the village has been empty for fifty years.’

‘You are right. I have learned a lot about the Karnsteins since I last saw you. But I must start at the beginning of my story,’ said the General. ‘You knew dear Bertha – my child, I may call her. She was as perfect as a rose; only three months ago, she was a picture of health.’

‘Yes, poor thing!’ said my father. ‘When I last saw her, she was very lovely. I was shocked and sad to hear your terrible news.’

He took the General’s hand and pressed it. Tears filled the old soldier’s eyes. He did not try to hide them.

‘We are very old friends,’ said the General. ‘Thank you for understanding my feelings. I have no children of my own. She was the centre of my world. She lit up my home and made my life happy. That has all ended. I do not have many more years on this earth. But I must do one thing before I die. I must find the monster who murdered my child. And when I find it, I must destroy it.’

Our carriage slowed down as we reached the turning to Karnstein. We turned onto a much narrower road. Not much traffic came this way now, and it was full of holes. The trees were very old and very tall here and the road was dark. We could just see the sun, until it went behind a cloud.

‘How far is it to the old village?’ asked the General.

‘It is about fifteen minutes’ drive from here,’ said my father. ‘Please, General. Tell us your story.’

**5.1 Were you right?**

**1 Think back to your discussions in Activity 4.4. Then circle the correct words in *italics* in the sentences below.**

- a *Laura / Madame Perrodon* finds Carmilla.
- b She finds her *behind the house / in her bedroom*.
- c Laura's father solves the mystery. He says that she *walked in her sleep / never went to bed*.
- d The doctor comes to see *Laura / Carmilla*.
- e Laura's father is very *worried / not worried* about her health.
- f Laura's father and Dr Herzog find *nothing / two small blue circles* on her neck.
- g She *is told / isn't told* what is wrong with her.

**2 How do the girls look? Write a sentence to describe each of them. Then discuss what explains the difference between them.**

a Laura .....

.....

.....



b Carmilla .....

.....

.....

**5.2 What more did you learn?**

**Complete the sentences with the numbers on the right.**

- a Laura's father and the General last met ..... months ago.
- b Bertha was very healthy ..... months ago.
- c The last Karnstein died ..... years ago.
- d The village has been empty for ..... years.
- e The General has ..... children.
- f It will take them ..... minutes to reach the village.

50
0
10
15
100
3

## 5.3 Language in use

Read the sentence in the box on the right. Then complete these sentences with the correct form of a verb from the box below.

The bedroom door and the dressing room doors **were locked** on the inside.

use      find      cover      murder      search      send      shock

- 1 Every corner of the castle and garden ..... as they looked for Carmilla.
- 2 After Carmilla ....., the servants ..... back to work.
- 3 The blue circles on Laura's neck ..... by her dress.
- 4 Laura and her father ..... by the General's sad, old face.
- 5 Bertha ..... by a monster, the General told them.
- 6 The road to Karnstein ..... not ..... much.

## 5.4 What happens next?

Which of these will be in the General's story, do you think?





## A Slow Death

*'I am going to cut off the monster's head,' he shouted.  
His face was red and angry, and he waved his arms above his head.*

The General took a minute to prepare himself. He then told the strangest story that I have ever heard.

'A few days before our visit to you,' the General began, 'Bertha and I were invited to a dance at Carlsfeld Castle. It was a wonderful evening with many important guests – counts and countesses, even a prince and princess!

'When we arrived, all the guests were outside in the gardens. They wore fine clothes and **masks**. The night air was warm and it was very romantic. Coloured lights hung from the trees. Guests sat in pretty boats on the lake and



**mask** /mɑːsk/ (n) something that hides your eyes or your face from other people

listened to some of the finest singers in Europe. The music was beautiful. You know that I love music. I believe there has never been a finer party – even in Paris! At the back of the castle, glass doors opened onto the gardens. Guests sat at pretty tables there, enjoying the wonderful food and drink. Bertha and I walked around the tables, watching the crowd. Somebody seemed to watch *us* too – a young lady. I was not sure at the time, but I am sure now. The young lady walked near us, with an older lady at her side. Perhaps they were a mother and daughter. Both wore masks and beautiful red dresses, and they looked important.

“The dancing began later and everybody went inside the castle. I stood at the side and watched Bertha – she danced beautifully. She did not wear a mask, and her fresh young face was a picture. After two or three dances, she stopped for a rest. She sat in a chair and I stood behind her. I noticed the same two ladies in



red dresses. They came towards us. The younger woman sat next to my child. The older woman spoke to me.

“General Spielsdorf,” she said. She kept her mask in front of her face. “We meet again! Do you remember our last meeting – at Gratz Castle? You had to leave early because you were not well. I hope you are well tonight.”

She talked about other dinners, other parties, from my past. She spoke of conversations and of good friends. Yes, I remembered them, but I did not remember *her*! She knew all about me. But who was she?

I tried many questions. She answered them all cleverly, but gave me no information. I felt uncomfortable, but she seemed to enjoy the conversation.

During this time, her daughter sat with Bertha. She introduced herself as Millarca – a strange name!

“My mother is an old friend of yours, I believe,” she said. She talked to Bertha like a best friend. She loved her dress. She said clever, sometimes unkind, things about the other guests, and Bertha laughed. In half an hour, they became the best of friends and Millarca took off her mask. She was so beautiful. Bertha could not take her eyes off her.

“Dear lady,” I said to her mother, “you seem to know me well. Please let me see behind the mask.”

“General!” she said. “It is not polite to ask a lady that! It is many years since we met. Years are not kind to ladies and perhaps you will not know me!”

“Dear lady,” I said, “I can see that you are not an *old* lady.”

“Millarca is my daughter,” she said. “So I cannot be young. And you have no mask. If I take off my mask, what will you do for me?”

“Please be kind to me, and show me your face,” I said.

“Please be kind to *me*,” she said. “Do not ask me to take off my mask!”

“Very well!” I answered. “You win! But perhaps you can tell me this – are you French or are you German? You speak both languages perfectly.”

“I do not think I will answer that, General,” she said. “You are preparing an attack, I think.”

I tried again. “I can see that you are a very important lady,” I said. “Shall I call you ‘Countess?’”

She began to answer me, but a man suddenly arrived at her side. He wore a fine black evening suit and no mask. He was handsome, except that his face was deathly pale.

“Countess,” he said to my lady friend. “I would like to speak to you, please.”

The lady turned quickly to him and put her finger to her mouth.

“General,” she said to me. “Please keep my place. I will return in a minute.”

She walked a little way away with the man in black. They talked seriously



for a short time. Then they slowly walked away together, and I lost them in the crowd.

‘While I waited, I tried to remember the Countess. I decided to join the conversation between Bertha and Millarca.

‘‘Perhaps I will learn the lady’s name from her daughter,’’ I thought.

‘But then the Countess returned with the man in black.

‘‘Countess, I will return when your carriage is at the door,’’ the man in black said.

‘‘Thank you,’’ said the Countess.

‘‘You are leaving already, Countess?’’ I said. ‘‘I hope you are only going for a few hours.’’

‘‘Perhaps a few hours, General, perhaps a few weeks. Do you know me now?’’

‘‘I have no idea who you are,’’ I said.

‘‘You *will* know me, I promise,’’ she said. ‘‘In three weeks’ time, I will pass your beautiful castle. I will visit you then for an hour or two, and we can talk about old times.’’

‘Her voice suddenly became serious.

‘‘I have just received some terrible news,’’ she said. ‘‘I must leave now, and travel all night and all day. I must go as fast as I can. There is something that I want to ask you. But as you do not know my name, perhaps you will refuse my request. My poor child fell from her horse a few days ago and she is not strong. The doctor says she must rest. We had to travel here very slowly – no more than two hours a day. But now my return journey is a matter of life and death. I will explain the reason for my journey when I visit you ... I hope I can visit you at your lovely house in a few weeks’ time.’’

‘She then made her request. It was a very strange request.

‘‘My dear General,’’ she said, ‘‘while I am away, could you give a home to my poor daughter?’’

‘At the same minute, Bertha came to my side and spoke quietly in my ear.

‘‘Please can I invite my new friend to visit us?’’ she said. ‘‘If her mother says yes, I will be so happy!’’

‘Of course, I wanted to say no. I knew nothing about them. But there was no time to think. The two ladies stood in front of me. The beautiful young lady looked at me and I could not refuse. I heard myself say yes. I invited the young lady to stay with us.

‘The Countess called her daughter to her. She repeated her travel plans to her.

‘‘The General is one of my oldest friends,’’ she said.

“You will be safe with us,” I said.

My own words surprised me. Why was I offering my home to this stranger? I did not like it.

“General,” said the Countess. “I must ask one more thing. Please do not question my daughter about me.”

The man in black returned. The Countess said a few words to her daughter, kissed her twice and left us. She and the man in black disappeared into the crowd.

“There is a window in the next room,” said Millarca. “You can see the castle entrance from there. I would like to wave to my mother.”

We agreed, of course, and went with her to the window. We looked out and saw a handsome carriage. There were servants all around it. We saw the man in black put a large black coat around the Countess’s shoulders. She touched his hand and then climbed alone into the carriage. We watched it drive away.

“What have I done?” I thought. “This is crazy.”



“She has gone,” said Millarca sadly, “and she did not look up.”

“Perhaps she did not want to show her face,” I said. “And she did not know that you were at the window.”

‘Millarca looked at me. She looked so beautiful and so sad that I felt sorry for my thoughts. It was impossible to be unkind to her.

‘Bertha and her new friend were soon happy again. Millarca put her mask on, and we all went back into the gardens. The music was beginning again by the lake. The three of us walked together around the gardens, in and out of the crowd. Millarca described many of the great people around us, and told us funny stories about them. I liked her more all the time.

“She will bring our lonely home to life,” I thought.

‘The dance continued until the early hours of the morning. By that time, we were all tired and ready to go up to our rooms. We passed through a large crowd of guests near the stairs. As we reached the stairs, we noticed that Millarca was not with us.

“She was by my side a minute ago,” said Bertha.

“She was just behind me,” I said.

‘But we could not see her anywhere. The fact was, she was lost.

‘We looked everywhere. Now I felt really stupid. I did not even know the child’s mother’s name! And I remembered my promise to the Countess: “I will say nothing about you or your journey to anyone!” How could I ever find her daughter now?

‘The sun came up. We searched all morning, but we discovered nothing.

“Bertha,” I said, “we must rest. You have not slept for more than twenty-four hours. We will continue our search later.”

‘We went up to our rooms. I tried to sleep, but I could not. At about two in the afternoon, a servant knocked at my door.

“Excuse me, General Spielsdorf,” said the servant, when I answered the door. “A young lady is downstairs. She is looking for you and the young lady, Miss Bertha. She says she is going to stay with you. But she cannot find you.”

‘I knocked at Bertha’s door. She dressed quickly. We hurried downstairs and there was

Millarca. What a pity that we ever found her!

“What happened?” we asked her. “You just disappeared!”





“I lost you in the crowd of guests around the stairs. I could not see you, so I went back into the gardens. I walked all around the castle, but I could not find you. In the end, I went to the housekeeper’s room and I fell asleep there. I was so tired after the ball, and I have only just woken up.”

“That evening we began our journey back to our castle. Millarca came with us.

‘At first, I was very pleased to have a new friend for Bertha. But the visit did not go well. The first problem was that Millarca was still weak from her illness. She was always very tired and never came downstairs until mid-afternoon. Second, we discovered a very strange fact. She always locked her room from the inside and never took the key out of the lock. As I have said, she slept most of the day. But we often saw her from the windows of the castle in the grey light of early morning. She walked through the trees, towards the east, like a person walking in her sleep. But how did she get out of her room, when it was still locked on the inside?

‘While I was worrying about Millarca, a much worse thing happened. Bertha became ill and she began to lose her looks and her health. But it was not a simple illness.

‘At first, she was frightened by terrible dreams. Then she began to see ghosts in her room. Sometimes the ghost looked like Millarca. Sometimes it was in the shape of a wild animal. It walked around her bed, moving from side to side.



And then she had strange feelings. One was quite pleasant, she said. She felt that she was swimming in ice-cold water. Another time, she felt a sharp pain in her neck. It was like two large needles going into her skin. A few nights after that, she felt hands tight around her neck ...'

The General's voice was shaking now and he stopped speaking.

I listened to the General's words as we came near to the village of Karnstein.

You can imagine how frightened I became. It was like looking into a mirror.



And when the General described their guest and her strange ways, he was describing Carmilla exactly!

The trees opened up in front of our carriage. There was Karnstein. The roofs and walls of the buildings were all falling down. Plants grew wildly over and around the little houses, and up the high walls of the great castle. Tall trees threw long, dark shadows over the ghostly village. There was no sign of life.

I climbed down from the carriage almost in a dream. We were all lost in our own thoughts. We walked through the strange and silent village and up into the empty castle.

'So the Karnsteins lived in this great castle,' said the General. He looked out across the village and the thick forest from a high wall. 'The Karnsteins were a

bad family. Their history is covered in blood and even death does not kill them. There is the Karnsteins' little church, down there,' he said.

He pointed to the walls of a grey building below. The sound of an **axe** came up to us from some trees next to the little church.

'It is the woodcutter,' said the General, and he started to climb back down the stairs. 'He is cutting trees around the church. Perhaps he knows the history of the Karnsteins and can show me the grave of Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein.'

'We have a picture of Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein at home. Would you like to see it?' asked my father.

'I do not need to see a picture of her,' said the General. 'I believe I have seen the Countess.'

'What?' said my father. 'The Countess died more than a hundred years ago!'

'I believe she is still alive,' said the General.

'General!' said my father. 'What are you saying?'

By now we had reached the little church. We passed through a large stone doorway and went inside. I say 'inside', but there was only half a roof. Tall trees covered the other half.

'Countess Mircalla has taken many lives,' said the old man. 'Now I am going to take hers.'

'What do you mean?' cried my father.

'I am going to cut off the monster's head,' he shouted.

His face was red and angry, and he waved his arms above his head.

'Cut off her head?' said my father.

'Yes, with an axe,' cried the General, his voice and body shaking.

He came towards me and took my arm.

'Please,' said the General, a little more calmly, 'sit here.' He showed me a broken grave. 'I will finish my story in a few sentences.'

I sat down and my father stood near me. The General called to the woodcutter. The man stopped his work and came into the church, carrying his axe.

'Can you show me the grave of the Countess Karnstein?' asked the General.

'No, I do not know where it is,' said the woodcutter.

'Have you worked in this forest for a long time?' my father asked him.

'I have been a woodcutter here all my days, working under the forester. My father was a woodcutter too, and his father. I can show you my family's house in this village – my family lived here for hundreds of years.'

'Why did everyone leave the village?' asked the General.



‘There were vampires, sir,’ said the man. ‘Many villagers were killed.’

A silence followed these words. My father looked quickly at me.

‘Continue,’ said the General.

‘The vampires were followed to their graves. The graves were opened and they were killed in the usual way. Their heads were cut off and **stakes** were pushed through their hearts. Then their bodies were burned.’

‘Was that the end of it?’ asked my father.

‘No,’ said the woodcutter. ‘Many vampires were destroyed, but still people were dying. Then one day, a Moravian man was travelling through Styria and he heard about the trouble. Like many people from his country, he knew all about vampires. He offered to help the village. He chose a night with a bright moon. Climbing to the roof of the little church, he prepared to watch the graves below. He did not have to wait long before the vampire come out of her grave. The monster took off her white clothes and put them on the ground next to her grave. Then she disappeared towards the village.’

‘The stranger came down from the roof, picked up the clothes and climbed back up. When the vampire returned some hours later, she screamed angrily. The Moravian waved the clothes at her from the roof. He invited the vampire to come for them. She began to climb up. When she reached the Moravian, he produced an axe. He cut the vampire’s head in two and pushed her off the roof. The Moravian ran down and cut the vampire’s head from her body. He took her body and burned it in a secret place. The Moravian then destroyed the grave of Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein.’

‘Can you show me where the grave was?’ asked the General.

The woodcutter shook his head.

‘Nobody knows that now,’ he said. ‘People say that her body was taken. But nobody really knows that either.’

‘Can I borrow your axe, my good man?’ asked the General, handing the woodcutter a piece of silver.

The woodcutter put his axe down and left us.

‘Now let me finish my story,’ said the General.

**6.1 Were you right?**

Look back at your answers to Activity 5.4. Then write these sentences again without mistakes.

1 Nobody was interested in the General and Bertha at the dance.

.....

2 The General and Bertha were wearing masks.

.....

3 The General knew the older lady in the red dress.

.....

4 The lady agreed to take off her mask.

.....

5 The General asked the Countess to look after Bertha.

.....

6 Millarca was happy when her mother left.

.....

**6.2 What more did you learn?**

1 Work with another student. You are guests at the dance at Carlsfeld Castle. Talk about the castle and gardens, the other guests, the young lady and the old general, and the two ladies in red dresses.



2 Write down three things that happened to Bertha, and also later to Laura.

a .....

b .....

c .....

### 6.3 Language in use

Read the sentences on the right.  
Then add these words to the story  
below.

**At first**, she was frightened by terrible  
dreams. **Then** she began to see ghosts  
in her room.

**finally then at the same time for hundreds of years after that**

- 1 ..... the woodcutter's family lived in the village, but  
2 ..... a lot of villagers were killed by vampires.  
3 ..... the villagers successfully destroyed many of the  
vampires, but 4 ..... people were continuing to die.  
5 ....., one night, a stranger to the village cut off Mircalla's  
head and destroyed her grave. Was that the end of the problem?

### 6.4 What happens next?

1 How will the General's story end? Write your ideas.

Notes

2 How will Laura's story end? Write your ideas.

Notes



## A Bath of Blood

*Suddenly, with a loud cry, the old General ran towards her with the axe. Her face changed. It became terrible and monstrous.*

‘Bertha was becoming worse,’ said the General, continuing his story. ‘Our family doctor – Dr Koubek – could do nothing for her. I sent for another doctor from Gratz. His name was Dr Plaschke, and he arrived a few days later. After spending some time with Bertha, the two doctors discussed her health in the library. I waited in the room next door. When their voices became loud and heated, I knocked on the door. The old doctor from Gratz was explaining his ideas, while Dr Koubek laughed at him rudely. They fell silent as I walked in.

“General,” said Dr Koubek, “our friend from Gratz thinks we are stupid country people! He is trying to sell us a crazy idea about monsters from the grave!”

“Excuse me!” said Dr Plaschke. “I will explain my *own* views! I am sorry, General, that I cannot help you. My skill and science are no use in this case. Before I go, I will write down my ideas.”

I was of course very unhappy with this news. I thanked Dr Plaschke and left him in the library. Dr Koubek pointed to the old man and touched his head with his finger.

I went into the garden. I knew nothing more about my poor child’s illness. Ten minutes later, Dr Plaschke came to find me.

“I am sorry to follow you,” he said. “I want to say a few more words. I am afraid that I am right. The young lady does not have a natural illness. Even worse, she does not have long to live. She has perhaps a day or two. If there is one more attack, she will die.”

“What kind of attack?” I asked.

“You will find my opinion in this note,” he said. “One last thing – there is a wise man who knows everything about this subject. I suggest that you invite him here immediately.”

‘And so Dr Plaschke left.

I read the letter.

*The patient, he wrote, is weak and tired. She is pale and she has lost a lot of blood. An examination of her neck showed two small blue circles. She has terrible dreams about a black cat and about swimming in ice-cold water. There is only one possible answer: The patient is suffering from the visits of a vampire.*

‘His letter then explained what I had to do.

I did not laugh at the old doctor’s view. I did not believe in vampires, but I followed the suggestions in his letter exactly.



‘I hid in the dark dressing room. The door was open just a little and I could see my poor, dear child. In the light of a bedside candle, I watched as she fell asleep. I had an axe ready at my side. Just after one o’clock, I saw a large black shadow moving over the foot of the bed. It quickly covered the child’s body and was at her neck. It became a monstrous shape!

‘At first, I could not believe my eyes. I was so shocked that I could not move. Then I ran towards the monster, with my axe in my hand. The black shape suddenly jumped to the foot of the bed and onto the floor. There, standing on the floor about a metre from the bed, was Millarca. The look on her face was evil. I attacked her with the axe, but my axe cut through fresh air. I turned. Now she was standing by the door. I ran towards her again and attacked her again. But she disappeared from the room! My axe stuck in the wood of the door.

‘I cannot describe to you everything that happened on that terrible night. Everybody in the house was now awake. We could not find Millarca. But we were losing my dear Bertha, and by the morning she was dead.’

The old General was crying now. My father walked across the little church to a side room to leave him alone. I looked around at this ghostly place, with its graves and terrible

history, and I felt afraid. Thick plants grew over the high, dark walls around us. No sunlight came in there.

I was pleased to hear the arrival of a carriage. Carmilla and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine were arriving with the tea. But I was sorry that my dear friends were coming into this sad place.

The General heard nothing. He dried his eyes and looked at the ground. He was lost in thought.

Above the door of the church was a stone monster. It had big, round eyes and an evil smile. And then, just below it, I saw the lovely face of Carmilla in the shadow of the door.

She smiled at me and I smiled back. I walked towards her. Suddenly, with a loud cry, the old General ran towards her with the axe. Her face changed. It became terrible and monstrous. She stepped back and down, like an animal. He attacked her with the axe, but she moved to the side. She caught his wrist in her small hand. He tried to free his arm, but she was too strong for him. His hand opened and the axe fell to the ground. And then she disappeared.

The General fell back against the wall. His grey hair stood up on his head and his face was ghostly white. He looked close to death.

Madame Perrodon came into the church.

'Where is Mademoiselle Carmilla?' she asked me, again and again.

I found it difficult to speak.

'I do not know,' I said, 'She went through there.' I pointed at the doorway.

'But I was standing on the other side of that doorway. I saw her come in here through the door, but she did not come out again.'

She began to call her name through every door and window, but there was no answer.

'What did she call herself?' asked the General. 'Carmilla?'







'Carmilla, yes,' I answered.

'Carmilla, Millarca ... she is the same monster,' he said. 'Long ago, she was called Mircalla, Countess Karnstein. Leave this terrible place, my child, as quickly as you can. Take the carriage and go to the priest's house. Stay there until we come. I hope you never see Carmilla again.'

Just then, a very strange man walked slowly into the little church. He was very tall with long, thin arms, and dressed in black. His face was brown and he wore a pair of gold glasses and a large black hat. His long, grey hair reached his shoulders.

'My dear man,' cried the General. 'How happy I am to see you! Thank you for coming so quickly.'

My father now returned from the side room of the church. The General called him to meet the stranger. He introduced them, and all three began to talk very seriously. The stranger took a piece of paper from his pocket. He opened it flat on a gravestone in the centre of the church. The three men looked at the paper and then at the building around them. It seemed to be a map, and they were finding different points on it. From another pocket, the stranger produced a little book with yellow pages. He read from the book to the others.

They walked around the church, talking all the time. Finally they all stopped in one corner. They pulled back the plants and found a large stone grave. A name was cut into the stone. It was the lost grave of Mircalla, Countess Karnstein.

The old General lifted his hands and eyes to the sky. He made a long, low noise, like a man in great pain. After a time, he was able to speak.





‘Tomorrow,’ he said to my father, ‘we will bring a judge here from Gratz. We will open this grave and we will bring to an end more than one hundred years of terror.’

The General then turned to the stranger with the gold glasses. ‘My dear friend, how can I thank you? How can we all thank you? At last, we have found the home of our terrible enemy.’

My father took the two men to one side. They continued their conversation, looking often at me. I am sure that they were discussing my illness.

Then my father came to me and took my arm. We left the church and he kissed me.

‘It is time to go home,’ he said. ‘But before we go home, we must find the priest. He lives near here, and we will invite him back to the castle.’

When we reached home, I was very tired. I was more tired than I have ever been. I was unhappy to find no news of Carmilla.

I had questions for my father.

‘What happened in the church, Father?’ I asked. ‘Please explain to me where Carmilla is.’

You, of course, have already guessed the answers. But I, in the middle of it, did not know what to think. Remember that I was very weak by now. But everything was a secret, and my father refused to answer my questions.

That night, two servants and Madame Perrodon sat in my bedroom. The priest and my father watched from the dressing room. I did not understand why they were all there.

Carmilla disappeared. My nightly suffering ended too.

I understood it all clearly a few days later.

You perhaps know that many people in Styria, in Moravia, in Serbia, in Poland, and even in Russia, believe in vampires.

We cannot say that vampires do not exist. In these countries, judges, priests, doctors and officers of the law have written reports of vampires. And these same judges, priests, doctors and officers of the law were all chosen because they were honest and intelligent men.

I cannot explain my story in any other way. I was visited by a vampire.

The next day, the judge came from Gratz to the little church in Karnstein. Law officers, two doctors, the priest, the General, the General’s friend, my father and I stood around the grave of the Countess of Karnstein. The grave was







opened. Inside lay a beautiful woman. My father, the General and I knew her immediately. She was Mircalla, the Countess of Karnstein. She was Millarca. She was Carmilla. It was more than a hundred years since the death of the Countess of Karnstein, but her eyes were open. There was no smell of death. The two doctors agreed that the body was alive. But there was something even more shocking. The body lay in a bath of blood. The grave was filled with fresh, red blood – so, yes, this was a vampire!

How do you destroy a vampire? As I have said, this was not the first vampire in Styria. There were men in the little church that day who knew the rules. First, they lifted the body from the grave. Then they pushed a sharp stake through the vampire's heart. The vampire screamed and everybody in the little



church felt an icy terror. Then the General cut off the vampire's head with an axe. Blood poured from the neck. The men placed the body and the head on a pile of wood outside the church. They made a fire and burned the vampire. The last pieces of smoking wood were taken to the river. The General threw them into the water and the river carried them away.

There has not been another vampire in Styria since that day.

I should say a little more about the General's friend. You remember that he found the grave of the Countess. His name was Herr\* Vordenburg and he came from Moravia.

\* *Herr*: the German for *Mr*

As a young man he lived in Gratz on very little money. He came from an old family in Upper Styria, but they were having money difficulties. The family castle and lands were lost. Herr Vordenburg spent his time studying vampires. He had every book on the subject. He soon knew more about vampires than any other person alive.

Herr Vordenburg stayed with us for a few weeks after Carmilla's death. He and my father spent many hours in conversation about vampires. After supper one evening, we sat together by the fire. My father told him about the Moravian man in the woodcutter's story. The Moravian, you remember, killed the Countess of Karnstein with an axe and destroyed the grave.

'So how did Mircalla return?' my father asked Herr Vordenburg. 'And how did you find the grave?'

With a mysterious smile, Herr Vordenburg began his story.

'That Moravian man was not, in fact, Moravian. He came from Upper Styria and his name was ... Count Vordenburg. Of course, I am from the same family. He wrote many notes and papers, and I have most of them. Some of the most interesting papers describe his visit to Karnstein.

'When he was very young, he fell in love with the beautiful Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein.'

'Excuse me,' said my father. 'I am just going to find something.'

My father left the room, but soon returned with the painting of Mircalla. He placed it on the table.

'Here is the lady,' said my father.

The picture was so like Carmilla – of course, it *was* Carmilla – that my blood ran cold.

'The Countess died young,' Herr Vordenburg continued, 'and it broke Count Vordenburg's heart. Let's imagine that Styria had no vampires at that time. So how does it all begin? I will tell you. It begins when an evil person kills himself or herself. That monster becomes a vampire and starts to visit living people. It bites them when they are asleep and drinks their blood. Then they die. In the grave, they become vampires too. The beautiful Mircalla was visited by one of these monsters. Count Vordenburg, like me, studied vampires, and he learned a lot about them. And he realised that even after her "death", Countess Mircalla was in danger. "People will discover that she is a vampire," he thought. "They will try to push a stake through her heart. What terrible place will she go to then?" He wanted to save Mircalla, his great love, from more suffering.

'So he came here. Everybody saw him destroy her grave.

"I have destroyed her!" he told the villagers. But he did not really destroy her! He saved her.



‘Many years later, when he was an old man, he looked back at this act. He realised how wrong it was. By that time, there were a lot of vampires in Styria, and many people were losing their lives. The villagers destroyed as many vampires as they could. But they could never kill the last one. They could never find Mircalla’s grave. The Count made the drawings and notes that brought me to Countess Mircalla’s grave.

‘The General wrote to me after poor Bertha died. And then I knew. It was time to destroy the last vampire.’

My father borrowed some of Herr Vordenburg’s books about vampires, and I read some too. I learned from them, but of course I already knew a lot.

First, vampires are not pale. When they live with people, they have a healthy colour. They look like you or me. Carmilla always looked quite beautiful – never pale.

Second, they often choose one special person. Mircalla chose Bertha first, and then me. Vampires can spend weeks or months falling in love with that one person. Then they start to drink their blood, but slowly, like a fine wine. And slowly that person, like Bertha, dies. While they are falling in love, they still need blood. So they find other people, usually young girls. They drink their blood in one or two visits, and the girls die quickly. That is what happened to the forester’s daughter and the young farmer’s wife.

None of the books can explain how a vampire gets in and out of its grave. But we know that it must spend some hours every day in its grave. You remember that Carmilla never came downstairs before one in the afternoon. In fact, she was out all night and then asleep in her grave in the morning.

Another sign of a vampire is a very strong hand. When the General tried to kill Carmilla, she caught his wrist. He had to drop the axe. He was never able to use that hand again.

The following spring, my father took me on a tour of Italy. We travelled for more than a year. I began to feel a little better, a little calmer.

Many years have now passed, but the terror of that time still lives with me. Blood-red memories fill my nights, and I hate to be alone during the day. Carmilla often visits my dreams. Sometimes she is sweet and beautiful. Sometimes she is the monster that I saw in the church. Often I wake suddenly. Then I think I can hear the light step of Carmilla. Is she just outside my door?

**1** Work in groups of five. One of you is going to have a **Monsters' Dinner Party** and the others will be guests.

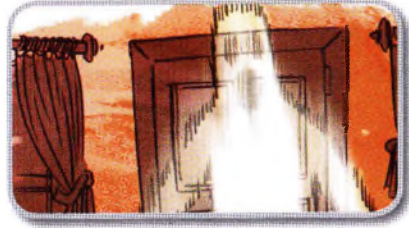
- a Decide on an ordinary menu for a dinner party.
- b Now choose your parts:



the party-giver



the evil queen



the ghost



the vampire



the mystery guest

- c Start the dinner party.

*Party-giver:* Greet the arriving guests and introduce them. Then offer the food and drink. What can you do about any special requests?

*Guests:* Meet the other guests. Politely accept or refuse food from the party-giver. Request a special food or drink if you prefer it.

- d Have a dinner party conversation. Discuss subjects like your favourite foods, films and books, and adventures that you have had.
- e End the dinner party.

*Guests:* Thank the party-giver and say goodnight. Say where you are going now.

*Party-giver:* Thank your guests for coming. Suggest another meeting?

**2** *Carmilla* was written in 1871. At that time, most people knew nothing about vampires. There have been many more vampire stories since then. Discuss your favourite vampire stories, and why you enjoy them.

1 Look back at the last chapter of *Carmilla*. Then complete this guide. Use the information that Laura gives.

## ⌘ How to Destroy Vampires: The Styrian Guide ⌘

### Have you got vampires?

 Signs to look for:

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 Things you will need:

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 What to do:

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- 1 Vampires need to know what is happening too. They have their own TV station. Read the notes for these three news stories. Discuss the feelings of the vampire in each story.

### STORY 1

**Where:** near New Orleans

**Who:** Louis De Pointe Du Lac (alone after the deaths of his wife and child); Lestat De Lioncourt (a vampire)

**What:** Unhappy Louis accepts Lestat's offer of a vampire's life, but drinks only animals' blood. He refuses to kill people by drinking their blood.



### STORY 2

**Where:** Transylvania

**Who:** Count Dracula; Jonathan Harker (knows all about English law and nothing about vampires); Van Helsing (thinks he knows about vampires)

**What:** Count Dracula goes to London on business. Van Helsing destroys his boxes of Transylvanian earth. Then Harker and Van Helsing follow the Count back to Transylvania. Harker kills the Count.



### STORY 3

**Where:** Sunnydale, California

**Who:** Buffy Summers (a schoolgirl who fights vampires and other monsters); Angel (a vampire)

**What:** Buffy and Angel fall in love. As a result of their love Angel becomes Angelus, an evil killer, and Buffy kills him.

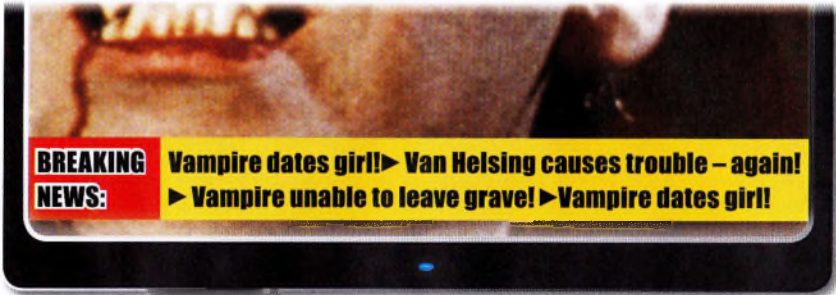


2 Choose your team. You need:

a newsreader ..... a reporter .....  
 people from each story to talk to on camera

.....  
 .....

3 Plan your programme.



a Choose a name for your programme.

.....

b Put your stories in order, and give each one a title.

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

4 Decide how to tell your stories. Tell each story in a different way. Here are some examples:

- Send a reporter to the place where the story is happening.
- Talk to one of the people in the story on camera.
- Talk to the neighbours.

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

5 Write the script. Then practise your programme before acting it for the class.

MUSIC

Welcome to .....! Here are today's top stories.

You're not going to believe this, but .....

STORY 1 .....

STORY 2 .....

STORY 3 .....

FINAL WORDS .....

MUSIC



# Carmilla

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

British English

Classic

Laura and her father live quietly in a castle in the middle of a thick forest, but their lives change when beautiful, strange Carmilla becomes their guest. People start dying, and Laura also becomes ill. Laura's father is worried. Will his daughter die too? Or can the deaths be stopped?

*Number of words (excluding activities): 16,603*

Series Editors: Jocelyn Potter and Andy Hopkins

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