

DRACULA

BY BRAM STOKER

CHAPTER TWO

From Johnathan Harkers journal

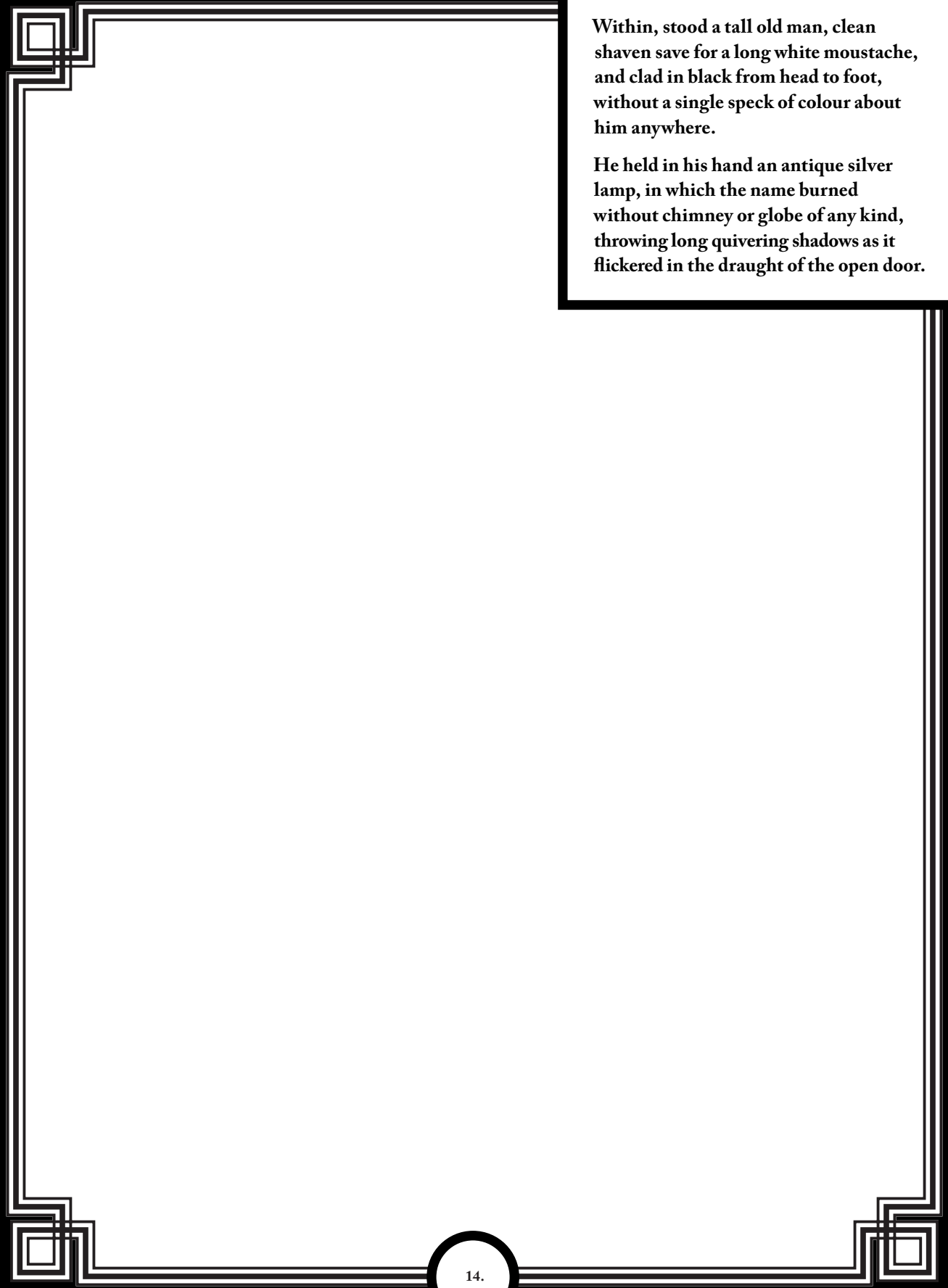
It all seemed like a horrible nightmare to me, and I expected that I should suddenly awake, and find myself at home, with the dawn struggling in through the windows, as I had now and again felt in the morning after a day of overwork.

But my flesh answered the pinching test, and my eyes were not to be deceived. I was indeed awake and among the Carpathians.

All I could do now was to be patient,
and to wait the coming of the morning.

Just as I had come to this conclusion I
heard a heavy step approaching behind
the great door, and saw through the
chinks the gleam of a coming light.

Then there was the sound of rattling
chains and the clanking of massive
bolts drawn back. A key was turned
with the loud grating noise of long
disuse, and the great door swung back.



Within, stood a tall old man, clean
shaven save for a long white moustache,
and clad in black from head to foot,
without a single speck of colour about
him anywhere.

He held in his hand an antique silver
lamp, in which the name burned
without chimney or globe of any kind,
throwing long quivering shadows as it
flickered in the draught of the open door.

The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation:—

**“Welcome to my house!
Enter freely and of your own will!”**

He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone.

The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed as cold as ice—more like the hand of a dead than a living man.

Again he said:—

“Welcome to my house. Come freely. Go safely; and leave something of the happiness you bring!”

The strength of the handshake was so much akin to that which I had noticed in the driver, whose face I had not seen, that for a moment I doubted if it were not the same person to whom I was speaking; so to make sure, I said interrogatively:—

“Count Dracula?” He bowed in a courtly way as he replied:—

“I am Dracula; and I bid you welcome, Mr. Harker, to my house. Come in; the night air is chill, and you must need to eat and rest.”

As he was speaking he put the lamp on a bracket
on the wall, and stepping out, took my luggage;
he had carried it in before I could forestall him.
I protested but he insisted:—

“Nay, sir, you are my guest.
It is late, and my people are not available.
Let me see to your comfort myself.”

He insisted on carrying my traps along the passage, and then up a great winding stair, and along another great passage, on whose stone floor our steps rang heavily.

At the end of this he threw open a heavy door, and I rejoiced to see within a well-lit room in which a table was spread for supper, and on whose mighty hearth a great fire of logs, freshly replenished, flamed and flared.