Renfield's Window: A Play in One Act

Bill Sherman

*College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University*

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RENFIELD'S WINDOW

A THESIS
The Honors Program
College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Distinction "All College Honors"
and the Degree Bachelor of Arts
In the Department of Theater

by
William A. C. Sherman
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PROJECT TITLE: RENFIELD'S WINDOW

Approved by:

Karen S. Johnston
Associate Professor of Theater

Thomas O. Darrell
Associate Professor of Theater

M. Earl A. Ferris
Associate Professor of English

Thomas O. Darrell
Chair, Department of Theater

Margaret L. Cosh
Director, Honors Thesis Program

Director, Honors Program
RENFIELD'S WINDOW

A Play in One Act

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William A. C. Sherman
Synopsis

Renfield is brought unwillingly to an asylum and is placed under the care of Dr. Seward. Renfield is a cunning and volatile madman who exhibits several unusual characteristics. He hides from the light of the sun and rejects food. The only nourishment he allows himself is to sip a cup of tea while sitting on the window sill.

Although the character of Renfield appears in Bram Stoker’s Dracula as the vampire’s lackey, this play is not a retelling of Stoker’s story. There is no vampire lurking outside and gently rapping on the window, yet Renfield is haunted all the same. Renfield is troubled by books, memories, souls and most importantly ghosts.

In three successive scenes, these ghosts manifest themselves through a Fly, a Spider, and a Cat. These three are portrayed as Victorian women carrying toy-like puppets who in turn tease, chastise, and dominate him. Their actions are coupled with Dr. Seward’s persistent attempts to understand his patient by pushing and probing his fears. Renfield struggles inside this maelstrom until he can no longer endure it and must try to find a way out.
Cast of Characters

Renfield: A madman in an asylum.
Dr. Seward: The head of the asylum.
Attendant 1: A middle-aged woman.
Attendant 2: A young man.
Fly: A young woman wearing a late Victorian dress.
Spider: A middle aged woman wearing a mid Victorian dress.
Cat: An elderly woman wearing a black, early Victorian dress.
Mina: Played by the same actress that plays the Cat and wearing the same costume.

Note: Only the Fly, Spider, Cat, and Mina wear Victorian clothing. All others wear modern dress.

Scene

Prologue: The base of an ancient tree.
Scenes 1-3: A patient’s room in an asylum.

Time

Prologue: Irrelevant.
Scenes 1-3: Soon after the start of spring.
PROLOGUE

SETTING: The base of an ancient tree.

AT RISE: The FLY, SPIDER, and CAT are gathered around the base of the tree. They chant and whisper the following in turn.

(The FLY is a young woman, wearing in a late Victorian dress. The SPIDER is a middle aged woman wearing a mid-Victorian dress. The CAT is an elderly woman wearing a black, early Victorian dress.)

FLY

The Well and the Tree --

The Tree and the Well.

SPIDER

CAT

Between them flows the Water --

The Waters of ago --

FLY

The Waters of memory --

SPIDER

CAT

Roots drinking deeply --

FLY

Water rising . . . reaching spreading boughs --

SPIDER

bringing life to green --

CAT

thoughts and --

FLY

dreams and --

SPIDER

worlds.

CAT

Water gathers on leaf-tips --
Drip drip dripping down --
FLY

Replenishing the Well. SPIDER

There is no CAT

memory without life FLY

life without memory. SPIDER

It has always been so CAT

But will not always be. FLY

More Water falls from leaves CAT

Than thirsty roots can draw up FLY

the Tree slowly dries SPIDER

the Well slowly fills CAT

until one day -- FLY

Well full -- SPIDER

Tree dry -- FLY

Everything is done. SPIDER

All else is folly. CAT

(END OF PROLOGUE)
ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: The stage is a room in an asylum, which will become RENFIELD’s room. There is one door, located stage right. There is a large octagonal window with a large sill and shutters. Outside of this window can be seen the bare upper branches of a tree. Alongside the bed is a small nightstand with a wind-up alarm clock. Next to the bed is an armless wooden chair and a small nightstand.

AT RISE: It is soon after the start of spring, just before dawn. The window’s shutters are open. The door is closed, and the stage is empty.

(clamor and struggle off-stage)

SEWARD
Hold him still! Keep hold of his arms.
(RENFIELD screams.)
There! The sedative takes just a moment. Hold him . . . hold . . . and there.
(The struggle fades. Pause.)
Good. Put him in three.

ATTENDANT 1

Yes, doctor.

ATTENDANT 2

Should we jacket him?

SEWARD
No, I don’t believe that will be necessary.

ATTENDANT 2

But doctor, he nearly --

SEWARD
That will be all, thank you.

(The two Attendants open door and enter, carrying the unconscious RENFIELD.)
ATTENDANT 2
God, the way he was battering himself, I thought he would crack his skull open.

ATTENDANT 1
He’s lucky. He probably would have if we hadn’t stopped him. Let’s check to make sure there’s no bleeding.

(The ATTENDANTS place RENFIELD on the bed. ATTENDANT 2 examines RENFIELD.)

ATTENDANT 2
How could he do that? I mean keep driving his hand against his head. It was like a machine.

ATTENDANT 1
Hmm ... No bleeding, no battle wounds. Good. He’ll have a nasty headache when he wakes up, but not much more. There, let’s prop his head up with the pillow ... Good enough.

(ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 cross to the door.)

ATTENDANT 2
Won’t he start again when he wakes up?

ATTENDANT 1
He might, but I don’t think so. His headache will remind him not to do silly things like that for a while.

(ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 exit, closing the door behind them.)

(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, RENFIELD is asleep in the bed. It is early morning, and birds chirp in the tree outside the open window. Sunlight falls across RENFIELD’s face. SEWARD is at the door with ATTENDANT 2. SEWARD is carrying a case file and a breakfast tray. On the breakfast tray are two eggs, served sunny-side up and several strips of bacon.)

ATTENDANT 2
Do you want me to stay with you?
SEWARD

There is no need. I will call if I need you.

ATTENDANT 2

He was quite a handful last night . . . aren’t you afraid --

SEWARD

Good heavens, if I was afraid of every patient, I would never have finished my residencies. The best advantage I have over my patients is a sound mind, and I am not going to let fear take that away from me.

And does it work?

ATTENDANT 2

Most of the time --

(RENFIELD tosses and grumbles.)

He’s waking. To your duties, please . . .

(ATTTENDANT 2 exits and closes door. SEWARD sits and studies file and RENFIELD. The light coming through the window slowly brightens and falls on RENFIELD’s face. RENFIELD slowly wakes. SEWARD watches his patient. RENFIELD raises his head, sees SEWARD and the open window and screams.)

Good morning.

(RENFIELD hides under the covers and whimpering.)

SEWARD

Come on out. You are safe here . . .

Liiiiight!

RENFIELD (whimpering)

SEWARD

Yes, the sun has just risen, and it looks to be a beautiful day. Not a cloud to be seen. Why not take a look for yourself?

The light!

RENFIELD (brokenly)

SEWARD

The sun rises every morning . . . nothing new about that and certainly no reason to hide. If the sun didn’t rise one morning, then I’d probably hide under the covers myself.
SEWARD (Cont.)
But no need to fear, the sun has done its job, and the
morning’s come. Come on out . . .
(SEWARD gently lifts a corner of
the sheet. RENFIELD dives further
under the covers. Pause.)
Should I close the shutters?

RENFIELD (brokenly)
Shu . . . Shut . . . Yess.
(SEWARD closes the shutters. The
room becomes dim, but not dark.)

SEWARD
There. They are closed. You can come out now.
(RENFIELD peers out and then
emerges from the covers. He sits
on the corner of the bed away from
SEWARD. SEWARD sits on the chair
and opens his case file.)
There. Is that better?

RENFIELD
(staring at clock)
Tick tick tick . . .
(chimes)
bim-bim bim-bim . . .

SEWARD
Not very helpful are you?
(RENFIELD takes the alarm clock
from the nightstand and cradles it
in his arms.)

RENFIELD
Faceless . . . numberless--

SEWARD (sternly)
Look, we won’t get very far unless you cooperate. Tell me
your name.
(RENFIELD is obsessed with the
clock.)
Hmm . . . Do you know where you are?

RENFIELD (absently)
Busy hands . . . empty hands . . . pointing . . . accusing
. . . mocking--
SEWARD
Now come on, it’s nothing like that here. Do you know why you are here?

(RENFIELD winds the clock.)

RENFIELD
(mechanical and staccato)
Tick-tock tick-tock . . . what time is it on your clock?
Tick-tock--

(RENFIELD continues winding the clock.)

SEWARD (encouraged)
Past seven-thirty, Renfield, and time to get up and for breakfast. Are you hungry? I have brought a tray for you.
(Although the mechanism will no longer wind anymore, RENFIELD continues the winding motion.)
Eh? Bacon and eggs? Don’t they smell delicious?
(RENFIELD moves closer and stares at the tray.)
Go ahead, try some. I’m sure its quite good.

(ATTDENANT 2 opens the door.)

ATTENDANT 2
Doctor, you are needed at once. Room six.

SEWARD
Very well.
(to RENFIELD)
I must go now, but I will be back later.
(SEWARD takes clock and sets it on the table, and then thrusts the fork into RENFIELD’s hand while RENFIELD dazedly stares at the food.)
Here’s your fork. Enjoy your breakfast.

(SEWARD exits rapidly. ATTENDANT 2 follows and closes door behind. RENFIELD stares at the plate, then suddenly attacks and beats the eggs with his fork, mashing them into a runny mess. He screams and laughs in delight.)

(BLACKOUT)
(When the lights return, RENFIELD is sitting in the window sill, staring out attentively. The shutters are open, revealing that it is night. SEWARD enters with his case file, and ATTENDANT 2 closes the door behind him.)

RENFIELD

Good evening, doctor.

SEWARD (surprised)

Pardon?

RENFIELD

Thank you for closing the shutters this morning. They disturbed me. I opened them just now . . . I hope you don't mind.

SEWARD

This is wonderful!

(He sits in the chair and opens his file.)

Do you mind if we chat for a while?

RENFIELD

If you like.

SEWARD

Can you tell me what your name is?

RENFIELD

The file you hold, as I suspect you well know, names me. Or are you in the practice of collecting unsuspecting folk on your own in order to keep your rooms full? I would hope not. When your goons snagged me off of the street last night, they did not take the time to ask my name. Well, you have me, who were you wanting? Tell me my name.

SEWARD

I would much rather that you told me.

RENFIELD

No, doctor, I am very curious indeed . . .

(Pause.)

But this leads nowhere -- Doctor, you must forgive my reluctance to give away the little which remains to me. You have taken my liberty, at least you can give me a name in return.
SEWARD
Must you be so stubborn? It is after all, only a name.
(Pause.)
Very well, I will answer your question if you answer another of mine first.

RENFIELD (smirking)
Name it.

SEWARD
Last night you raved and struggled, and this morning you wouldn’t speak to me, but now you are ready to match wits with me.

RENFIELD
Fair enough. How would you respond if two goons snagged you off of the street? Or what would your talk sound like after being sedated enough to stop a drafthorse?

SEWARD
But the way you beat your head?

RENFIELD
I hoped to wake my mind up . . . from an unbelievable dream. But doctor, that has been two questions, and now you must answer mine.

SEWARD
Very well, Renfield, I am more than willing to cooperate with you.

RENFIELD
So that is what it says . . . Renfield? A curious name, indeed. First or family, I wonder . . . hmm? No matter. It is a distinctive name, and for that reason, I like it. You say that I am Renfield. Very well, nolo contendere.
(Pause.)
Now tell me, if you will please, doctor, who was it that put you up to this? Who sent Renfield here?

SEWARD
I will not tell you that.

RENFIELD
Why not? You are not cooperating. You must know the answer . . . can you not tell me?

SEWARD
I do know, but I won’t. It is not important to the matter at hand. Let it suffice to say that someone who cared enough about you asked that you receive help. Now focus on what you will do while you are here.
RENFIELD
I remember a pair of hands, worn and chapped, yet warm and
sweet smelling. They rarely touched me, but they loved me.
Could they have sent me here?

SEWARD
Whose hands? Your mother's?

RENFIELD
They might have been. It was so long ago . . . I have
forgotten.

(RENFIELD opens the window.)

SEWARD
Careful!

RENFIELD
Oh, of course, doctor. I just wanted to feel the breeze and
look beyond the glass. It is a lovely night tonight. The
janus moon shows her fair face, and the stars are so many--
like carelessly sown grain. Who will tend to them, see that
they grow, and when the time comes harvest them, take them
to the marketplace? And when the bargainers haggle, will he
sell them all for a sou?

SEWARD
But Renfield, who could sell the stars? No one can own
them.

RENFIELD
Thirty yards of silk have I
to wrap the bones of my father.
Yet the moths have eaten the cloth,
And I cannot buy another . . .

(SEWARD scribbles furiously.)

SEWARD
What is this about your father? Burying his bones . . .

RENFIELD
Shouldn't the dead be buried?

SEWARD
Of course . . .

RENFIELD
It is a good thing, then, to bury the dead?
It is our duty out of love and respect.

Then why is it so difficult to do?

Difficult?

Why do they refuse to be buried? Why will they not cooperate?

How can they resist us?

Their ghosts have taken up residence . . .
(conspiratorially)
. . . in my mind.

Have they? How so?

Don’t you know? You must have your own ghosts. Don’t they talk to you?

Of course . . . but tell me, what do these ghosts tell you?

For the most part, they are content to talk among themselves and leave me alone, but I always hear their constant chatter. It is like being trapped in a drawing room full of musty relatives, none of them with the slightest intent of leaving.

Do you know who all of these ghosts are?

Some of them. I recognize the most talkative of them, but the problem is . . . every one I see, everyone I meet dies and becomes a ghost. Those people that I hardly know become quiet aunts who sit and nod off in the corner, but the more that I know a person in life, the more talkative and meddlesome they are as ghosts. The talkative ones always want my attention and tell me what and what not to do.

But are you forced to follow them?
RENFIELD
They are persistent. I have tried resisting them or ignoring them, but they won't be quiet until I have agreed to do what they say. That is why I don't want to meet anyone else. The more of them, the less I become. I am being crowded out of my own mind.
(Pause.)
Isn't there some ceremony that can be done to get rid of them—in exculpation?

SEWARD
Exorcism? Yes, the church will still do it, but they like to give first crack to professionals like me before stepping in. It seems our job is to ferret these unwanted ghosts out and show them the door. Would you like that?

RENFIELD
Very much, I think. But we must be careful, I don't want to offend them, I don't know what might happen if they became angry with me.

SEWARD
Of course. We will have to be careful. I don't advise evicting them instantly, but we will work on them one by one. I'm glad you want to cooperate.
(Pause.)
Now what I would like to do is give you a small book in which --

RENFIELD (sharply)
Not a book! No! I'll not take it!

But why not?

SEWARD (cautiously)

RENFIELD (ominously)
They are worse—far worse than people. They plant themselves in my mind. Words are a prison. Words and time conspire to trap me. Even when I do not speak, I think them. I'll let no more words inside of me. What is a story but words and ghosts? They are dangerous, and I do not trust them. They try to control my life, supplanting my life with dreams. Books are an opiate which --

SEWARD
Now don't get yourself worried. I wasn't going to give you a book to read, but rather a book to write in... something to write your thoughts in. You could get the words and maybe some ghosts out of your head.
RENFIELD (excitedly)
Ahah! I see what you mean . . . When they are out I can burn them and scatter their ashes . . . and then I’d be free.
Doctor, you are wise indeed! Oh what fun, please do, bring me a book instantly so that I may start writing!

SEWARD
Certainly Renfield, I’m glad to see you so enthusiastic. While I get your book, can I get you something to eat as well? My attendants tell me that although you played with your breakfast you didn’t eat anything and you refused lunch and dinner.

RENFIELD
My stomach hasn’t felt at all well today.

SEWARD
But you must be hungry by now. What would you like for dinner? Do you have a taste for anything?

RENFIELD
No thank you, doctor.

SEWARD
Come on, you must eat something. You will not be able to write for long if you don’t keep up your strength.

RENFIELD
Very well, in that case, may I have a cup of tea please, doctor?

SEWARD
That’s not much. Are you sure that you wouldn’t want something more substantial as well?

RENFIELD
Just a cup of tea, please. I don’t think I could keep anything else down right now.

SEWARD
I’ll have it brought immediately.

(SEWARD knocks, and ATTENDANT 2 opens the door. RENFIELD stares absently out of the window.)

ATTENDANT 2
Any problems, doctor?

SEWARD
No, things went very well. I’m done here. He wants some tea, though. Bring it to him.
ATTENDANT 2

Very well, doctor.

RENFIELD

Don't forget my book!

(SEWARD reaches in his pocket and takes out his notebook and a pen. SEWARD crosses to the window.)

SEWARD

Why don't you take this notebook? You can use it until I can find a proper book for you to write in.

(SEWARD offers his notebook and pen to RENFIELD, who takes them.)

RENFIELD (eagerly)

Thank you doctor! I'll start writing right away.

SEWARD

I'm sure you will. I'll be back later to see what you've written.

(SEWARD exits. Pause. RENFIELD begins writing furiously, dictating to himself as he writes.)

RENFIELD

Hunger. I am addicted to the awakening chill that affirms my being. I want to distill it, to refine it, to preserve it... Yet already my misformed heart grows weary. What must I do to keep the spark of life within me? I know it burns within me... keeping my heart beating, my blood warm, and my mind fresh, yet it is invisible. I am its torchbearer. Life runs its race through the blind, the unknowing, and the hopeful. Yet, when the last runner trips in the gathering darkness, will there be an ancient city on a hill or merely blackness waiting to receive the message? How can I trust others after me to finish the course? Besides, I am curious... I should see the end myself. I must shelter this flame within me and find fuel for its voracious appetite. But how...

(RENFIELD suddenly halts, puts down the book, and sits silently staring out the window. Enter ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2. ATTENDANT 1 is carrying a tray with a pot of tea, a cup and a sugar bowl. The door remains open.)
Here is your tea.

(ATTENDANT 1 clears her throat.)

Your tea?

ATTENDANT 2

He doesn’t seem to want it now.

ATTENDANT 1

Of course not.

(to RENFIELD)

If you aren’t wanting it now, we will leave it here on the table for you.

(ATTENDANT 1 sets the tray on the table.)

ATTENDANT 2

It’s getting cold. Don’t you want your tea? If you don’t drink it, I will.

(ATTENDANT 2 picks up the teacup.)

ATTENDANT 1

Put that down.

ATTENDANT 2 (defensively)

I’m just trying to encourage him . . .

ATTENDANT 1 (lecturing)

Don’t waste your time. He will drink, when he wants to, but not before. So don’t go playing games with him, you will only frustrate yourself.

ATTENDANT 2

But he hasn’t eaten anything all day. He’ll starve.

ATTENDANT 1

Not our problem. We brought the tea . . . for now that is enough.

ATTENDANT 2

But he looks pale already! He --

ATTENDANT 1

If he doesn’t end up eating on his own, then it is for the doctor to decide. If he tells us to feed him, we will, but not before. Put the tea down.

(ATTENDANT 2 sets the tea on the tray)

There. It’s all for the best.
ATTENDANT 2
The best? For the patients? How can ignoring them until they starve be for the best? It seems a poor way to run an asylum.

ATTENDANT 1
I wouldn't say that.

(RENFIELD leaps from the window-sill, flapping his arms and crowing. He circles the ATTENDANTS.)

See, I told you he was a loony bird. Come on, let's leave him alone.

(ATTENDANT 1 and 2 exit. RENFIELD takes tray and sets it on the window-sill. RENFIELD opens the window. ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 peek in through the door. RENFIELD snaps back and crows at them. They withdraw. RENFIELD spoons a generous line of sugar along the window sill. He then elevates the teacup and pours the tea over the sugar, creating a sticky mess. RENFIELD sits on the floor facing the window and waits. He pours himself another cup of tea and sips it. He stares into the cup. The FLY, a young girl in Victorian dress, appears through the window. RENFIELD sets down the tea, rises and crosses to the window. The FLY and RENFIELD mirror each other.)

(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, the shutters of the window are closed. RENFIELD and the FLY are playing follow the leader. The FLY is seated in the chair in the center of the room, but she holds a long, flexible wand which telescopes. From the far end of this wand, a fly dangles on a thread, henceforth referred to as the fly puppet. RENFIELD is chasing after the fly puppet. The FLY laughs and giggles, while RENFIELD, breathing
heavily, staggers and follows as best he can.)

FLY
Come on, keep up can’t you?

RENFIELD
(gasping and pleading)
Slower . . . go slower . . . please . . .

FLY
But slower is hardly any fun.

RENFIELD
I can’t . . . I must rest . . .
I’m sorry.

(RENFIELD slumps against the bed.
Pause.)

FLY
Won’t you play anymore? You can lead if you want to.

RENFIELD
Not now . . . I can’t . . .

FLY
You always get worn-out so quickly.

RENFIELD
I can’t help it. I’ve always been that way.

FLY
Just as things start to get fun, you sit out. I remember when your family would visit us. We would be playing, and you would get upset. It was always something. You wanted to be competitive . . . you tried so hard --

RENFIELD
I wanted to win . . . to show that I was as good as anyone else. Or else they would leave me alone when they went to play. I hated that.

FLY
You tried so hard that you always tripped yourself up. It was funny to watch, except that I could see that it hurt you so. You punished yourself for anything that went wrong, whether it was your fault or not. I wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry.
RENFIELD

I didn’t want your pity, I wanted your praise.

FLY

Eventually things would go so badly for you that you would either throw a fit, ruining the game, or sit out saying that you were tired. And then you know what you would do? You’d stick your nose in a book until it was time to leave.

So?

RENFIELD

FLY

And when I peeked over your shoulder, to see what you were reading, you grunted and turned away.

RENFIELD

So then you would reach over my shoulders and snap the book shut. Do you know how many bloody noses you gave me?

FLY (laughing)

Just as many as you deserved.

It wasn’t your nose.

RENFIELD

FLY

Of course not.

(Pause.)

You don’t have any books this time.

RENFIELD

They’ve taken them all away. Besides I don’t want to read them anymore.

FLY

Why not? When you were younger, that was your favorite thing. When I could pry you from a book, we would sit down by the pond, and you would tell me the stories of what you had read. Better yet, you would make up stories. We would stretch back on the grass, and you would tell stories about pictures that we saw in the clouds, and when it turned dark, you would tell stories about the people who lived in the stars.

RENFIELD

All that has changed! I don’t tell stories anymore.

FLY

But you still make them up.
FLY (Cont.)

(smiles)
I know . . . they are still in your head, and every so often, whether or not you want them to, they creep out of your mouth.

(sweetly)
Why don’t you tell me one, now? I would very much like to hear one . . .

RENFIELD (adamant)
I’ll tell no more stories!

FLY (reassuring)
Don’t work yourself up. I don’t want to make you angry . . . but you seem so determined. What harm would there be in one small story?

RENFIELD
You don’t understand! It isn’t as simple as all that . . .

(Pause.)
What do you want from me? Why are you here? You want something besides a story.

FLY
Can’t you accept that I enjoy being with you?

RENFIELD
You were never so simple! You were always toying with me . . . playing with me . . . wanting something . . . hinting . . . teasing -- but never anything directly. And I would try to puzzle out your secret.

(Pause. RENFIELD stands.)
I remember you clearly. Yours were the golden days of gentle breezes and you were as intangible as the wind which played in your hair. Present . . . close . . . yet untouchable. We would take walks through the parks, and there you would talk of the dandies who swooned around you. I became your confidant. In those halcyon days, you became my muse. You were a princess, and I was your court magician whose sole pleasure was to create stories for your amusement . . . weaving wonders from the threads of nothingness. You were alive within the present. You were immortal!

(Pause.)
I strove to be like you, but instead of seizing the sun, I was hobbled by my mortality and mostly floundered in mud puddles. I grew bitter at your freedom . . . I learned to scorn you. You, your laughter, your love of the sun. To escape them, I fled into the darkness. There at least, if there was not solace . . . there was silence. But even here I dream of the days before my eyes became too sensitive . . . and I still want to claim the sun and capture the life within me, but now for other reasons . . .
RENFIELD (Cont.)

(Pause.)
And now you've intruded into my solitude as well. What is to be done?

FLY
You have changed less than you think . . . you still tell stories . . . and I am still your audience . . .

RENFIELD

Leave me alone!

(RENFIELD sits leaning against the side of the bed.)

FLY

Not now . . .

Please . . .

RENFIELD (pleading)

FLY

Let's play another game.

RENFIELD

Now what? I can't . . .

FLY

Oh don't worry. I wouldn't want you to wear yourself out again. I'm thinking of Questions. You think of something, and I will try and guess it.

RENFIELD

Haven't you asked enough of me? Why more?

FLY

Because it is something to pass the time with, and I enjoy guessing. Are you thinking of something?

RENFIELD

No. I refuse to play.

FLY

Oh, come on . . . it will be fun!

(Pause.)
And besides, you don't have anywhere to hide this time. I have you all to myself.

(Pause.)
Is it an animal or vegetable?

RENFIELD

It's animal.
FLY
Hmm . . . is it large or small?

(ATTENDANT 1 opens door for SEWARD, who enters. ATTENDANT 1 closes the door. SEWARD is carrying his file.)

SEWARD
Good afternoon, Renfield.

(SEWARD crosses to the chair.)

RENFIELD
Good morning, doctor.

(SEWARD is about to sit.)
No, don’t sit there!

SEWARD
Why not, Renfield?

FLY
Renfield, is it large or small?

RENFIELD (quickly)
Small.

(to SEWARD)
Ah. I mean . . . I’d prefer if you sat here, next to me, doctor.

SEWARD
Is that what you want?

RENFIELD
Yes, I’m sure of it, doctor.

FLY
Is it fast or slow?

SEWARD
Fine. I’ll sit across from you.

FLY
Did you hear me? I asked if it was fast or slow.

RENFIELD
(to Fly)
I’m sorry. It’s fast.

FLY
Is it light or heavy?
SEWARD
Renfield? What's fast? Why are you looking at the chair? I'm here on the floor like you asked.

RENFIELD
(growing confused)
I'm sorry, doctor -- what do you want?

SEWARD
I'm curious about your writing. Can I see what you wrote?

FLY (insistent)
Light or heavy?

RENFIELD
Yes -- it is light -- Very light.

SEWARD
Don't worry about what you've written, at least you have started . . . where is your book?

What?

FLY
Hmm . . . let's see . . .

SEWARD
Your book, where is it?

(Pause.)
You are looking pale, Renfield. Can I bring you some dinner?

FLY (rushing)
Did he mention dinner? I am famished. Renfield, ask him to bring dinner for us.

(continuing game)
Does it walk or fly?

RENFIELD (overwhelmed)
We would -- I mean -- Dinner -- It flies -- Yes -- bring dinner . . .

(pleadingly)
please . . .

SEWARD
Would you like tea, too? FLY
I know! You thought of me! Oh, how wonderful.

Yes!

(exploding)
RENFIELD (Cont.)

Leave me alone--both of you!

(RENFIELD turns away from both of them. SEWARD rises.)

SEWARD (tentatively)

Very well . . . I will have dinner brought for you.
(SEWARD knocks on door. Pause.)

Both of us?

(ATTENDANT 1 opens door. Both exit. The door is closed.)

FLY

I have upset you again. It is so easy for me to do, and I don’t understand why. I had hoped that you would have changed, but you never have.

RENFIELD

Neither have you.

(The FLY extends the wand and dangles the fly puppet in front of RENFIELD.)

FLY

Why can’t we get along?

RENFIELD (short)

Because you don’t leave me alone.

FLY

It is more than that, I think. Isn’t it? You keep thinking of me. Tell me, has there been a single day that has gone by without you thinking of me?

(Pause.)

RENFIELD

No. It’s not that I haven’t tried.

FLY

Poor boy . . . all the time you have spent dreaming. I don’t know what I can do to help you.

(ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 enter. ATTENDANT 2 is carrying the dinner tray, and ATTENDANT 1 is carrying the tea.)
ATTENDANT 1
Hey Renfield, here’s dinner for you.

(The FLY circles the fly puppet around ATTENDANT 2 and the tray.)

FLY
Oooh! Dinner is here, Renfield! It smells wonderful!

ATTENDANT 2
Hey, there’s a fly in here! Get away. Go on. Shoo.

ATTENDANT 1
I see it. Don’t worry it won’t hurt you.
(The fly puppet lands on the tray.)

ATTENDANT 2
No. That’s not for you. Go on. Leave.

ATTENDANT 1
You think it can understand you? It’s not a dog -- it’s a nuisance.

(ATTENDANT 1 brushes the fly puppet away.)

RENFIELD (sharply)
Don’t say that. The Fly is my friend.

ATTENDANT 1
Come on, we’ve got work to do. Let’s leave the fly with him and get going.

ATTENDANT 2
Right.

(ATTENDANT 2 sets the tray on the table. ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 exit and close the door. RENFIELD takes the tea and crosses to sit on the window sill. He opens the shutters and the window. It is early evening. The FLY uncovers the dinner tray.)

FLY (eager)
Hmm . . . A pork chop and applesauce.

RENFIELD
Go ahead . . .
FLY

Are you certain?

RENFIELD

It’s yours. I just wanted the tea—the rest of the food is for you.

(The FLY eats with pleasure.)

FLY

Considering the crudeness of the service, the food is much better than I expected. Aren’t you hungry?

RENFIELD

I’m fine. I have my tea.

FLY

You expect to survive on tea?

RENFIELD

No more than you can expect to live off of that.

FLY

I don’t understand what you mean.

RENFIELD

Tell me, why do we eat?

FLY

That’s easy. We eat to stay alive.

RENFIELD

Right. Now are all things equally good for us. Do rocks and dirt fulfill the need?

FLY

No. Some things are better than others.

RENFIELD

Now the pork was once part of a live pig and the applesauce was once growing apples. They were as alive as you or I, but now they are dead. How can things which are dead and have been cooked bring us more life?

FLY

I don’t know.

RENFIELD

It doesn’t make sense, does it? If eating this can keep us alive, why do we age and die?
FLY
Maybe eating isn’t everything.

RENFIELD
Or maybe . . . we are eating the wrong thing. If life was just sustaining my flesh, then I could live by eating the dead. But each moment, a portion of my life escapes me. When it is all gone I will be nothing more than that cut of meat . . . an empty shell. If I want to lengthen my life, I need to find a better way to supplement it. Until then, I’ll drink my tea.

FLY
Better think quickly, that tea won’t hold you forever. In fact, in a couple of days, I bet you will fight me for the pork chops.

(Pause.)
But don’t worry about them now, they are all gone.

RENFIELD
You ate quickly.

FLY
I was hungry. So what now? Do you want to play another round of Questions?

RENFIELD
No, I want a nap.

(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, RENFIELD is asleep in the window sill. The window and shutters are open. The FLY sits in the chair, while the fly puppet flits around the room. ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 enter. ATTENDANT 1 is carrying clean linens. They leave the door open.)

ATTENDANT 2
It’s not worth changing his sheets. He hardly sleeps in the bed. He likes the window better.

(RENFIELD slowly wakes and listens.)

ATTENDANT 1
It’s part of our job to change the sheets on each patient’s bed weekly. Whether or not they use it . . . we change it.
ATTENDANT 2
How about just straightening out what is on the bed? No one would ever notice.

ATTENDANT 1
Here. Help me strip the bed.

(ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 change the linens. The FLY uses the fly puppet to circle ATTENDANTS 1 and 2 with interest.)

ATTENDANT 1
There’s that fly again.

ATTENDANT 2
Seems to like you.

ATTENDANT 1
I wish it didn’t.

(to fly puppet)
Go away. Find someone else to annoy.

ATTENDANT 2
No luck. It wants to be your friend.

ATTENDANT 1
Well I don’t. I’ve had enough. I’m going to get the swatter.

(RENFIELD blanches in horror, as ATTENDANT 1 exits with the linens. ATTENDANT 2 finishes making bed and picks up the dinner tray from chair.)

ATTENDANT 2
(calling to off-stage)
Hey, it isn’t where you think it is. I used it yesterday.

(ATTENDANT 2 exits and closes the door. RENFIELD opens the window.)

RENFIELD
You must go. Out the window, quick. They mustn’t find you here when they come back.

FLY
I won’t go. I like it here.

RENFIELD
If they catch you, they’ll crush you.
FLY
I’m too quick for those bumbling. They can’t catch me.

RENFIELD (impatient)
One crack and your quickness is over. I don’t want to see your lifeless, mangled body. Damn it! That is what will happen to you if you stay. I refuse to become an accomplice to suicide.

RENFIELD (Cont.)
Then I must rely on you to protect me.

FLY (calmly)
No! Don’t rely on me or my honor. I have failed you before . . .

(Pause.)
Please go. I love you.

FLY
I know. That is why I am staying.

(ATTEDANT 1 and 2 enter.
ATTENDANT 1 carries a swatter.)

ATTENDANT 1
Now where is that fly?

ATTENDANT 2
I don’t see it. Close the door.

(ATTEDANT 1 closes the door, and searches for the fly puppet.)

ATTENDANT 2
There it is! Careful not to startle it!

(RENFIELD, snarling, rushes at them. ATTENDANT 2 struggles with RENFIELD while ATTENDANT 1 closes on fly puppet with the swatter.)

ATTENDANT 2
(to RENFIELD)
Calm down. It’ll all be over in a moment.

(to ATTENDANT 1)
He doesn’t seem to like this.

ATTENDANT 1
Tough for him. We are doing our job, keeping his room clean and free from things that breed disease.
(ATTENDANT 1 swats at the fly puppet. The fly puppet leaps and rushes around the room. ATTENDANT 1 chases after it.)

ATTENDANT 2

Get it?

ATTENDANT 1

Nope. Missed it.

FLY (taunting)

Hey, stumblefoot! You’re too slow! You can’t catch me!

(thrilled)

Renfield . . . this is just like tag.

RENFIELD (anguished)

Damn you! Get out of here!

FLY

This is too easy. I’m going to have to give her a chance before she runs out of breath.

(The FLY and the fly puppet stand in the corner. ATTENDANT 1 sneaks up behind and prepares to strike.)

ATTENDANT 1

There. I’ve got it cornered. Stay still.

(RENFIELD breaks free of ATTENDANT 2 and dashes to the corner, screaming.)

Just a moment . . .

(RENFIELD places himself between ATTENDANT 1 and the FLY. RENFIELD snatches the fly puppet off the end of the FLY’s wand and cups it in his hands. He sits and smiles. The FLY remains motionless behind him.)

ATTENDANT 2

Damn, he is strong.

ATTENDANT 1

Don’t tell me, I remember. Look at him, sitting as proud as any bishop.

ATTENDANT 2

Well, we’re not going to get that fly now. Let’s go.
ATTENDANT 1 (stubbornly)

Not so fast.

ATTENDANT 2

But, he’s clearly upset. I don’t think that we should upset the patients.

ATTENDANT 1

I’m not going to be outwitted by a half-wit. He’s holding his friend very carefully... trying to protect it. Well, let’s make sure that he holds on tightly. Help me. I’ll take one hand, and you take the other. Time for his grace to pray.

(RENFIELD panics. He draws his hands close, and stares at the closing attendants. Before they can reach him, he draws his hands to his mouth and swallows. The FLY lowers her head. RENFIELD turns empty palms out to the ATTENDANTS and laughs madly. sharply)

You insolent--

(ATTENDANT 1 strikes RENFIELD repeatedly.)

ATTENDANT 2

Don’t do that!

(ATTENDANT 2 restrains ATTENDANT 1. RENFIELD whimpers.)

Calm down.

ATTENDANT 1 (resisting)

But he--

ATTENDANT 2

Calm down. Think of your job... .

ATTENDANT 1 (stunned)

Oh god... Seward will find out... and then--

ATTENDANT 2 (conspiring)

Not so fast. We can still cover ourselves. Remember Renfield charged us, and he struggled with me. He could have injured either of us. We had to restrain him, and we are fortunate not to be hurt ourselves.

(Pause.)

I think we should tell Seward that his pet madman has turned violent on us. That’s true, and it should settle things nicely.
(ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 cross to door.)

ATTENDANT 1
(gaining confidence)
You’re right. Someone as dangerous as him ought to be restrained . . .

(Exit ATTENDANTS 1 and 2. RENFIELD sits still in the corner, staring into his empty hands.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 2

SETTING: RENFIELD's room is the same as in SCENE I, except there is a daisy in a small vase on the table next to the bed. It is evening, and the shutters are open.

AT RISE: RENFIELD is sitting up in bed. He is restrained by a strait jacket. SEWARD sits by his bedside, with a clipboard in hand.

SEWARD
You are looking well today, Renfield.

RENFIELD
Fagh!

SEWARD
No, really. Dinner last night did you good . . . your color has come back and --

RENFIELD
Go suck eggs.

SEWARD
Renfield, that's certainly no way to talk. Besides if I were you, I would be more careful how I behave . . .

RENFIELD
If I am me, I wouldn't put up with you, Doctor.

SEWARD
Oh, and who would you put up with?

(Pause.)

RENFIELD (grumbling)

Let me go.

SEWARD
Now, Renfield, you know that I can't do that. Not after what you did --

RENFIELD (boldly)


SEWARD (sharply)

I will not tolerate you mistreating my attendants.
RENFIELD (continuing)
I tell you, they did no wrong! Could you, doctor, sit idly by and watch your friend be murdered?
(Pause.)
Perhaps you could. Perhaps your only friends are your experiments.

SEWARD
Renfield, murder? It was only a fly.

RENFIELD
And you, doctor, are only a man. Tell me the difference! I had to defend her . . . or else I would be as guilty as they were.

SEWARD (emphatically)
But you ate it. Ate a fly . . . That's hardly healthy, and certainly not friendly. Besides, the end result is still the same. The fly is dead.

RENFIELD
No. The attendants would have killed her for spite . . . with no respect for the life within her. But with me, her life was not wasted. She fed me and became part of my life.
(plaintive)
How am I to write without my hands? I must have my hands . . . give them back to me . . .

SEWARD
Your hands are yours to earn back by your good behavior. If you are that eager to be free, then show me that you can control yourself and . . . that I can trust you.

RENFIELD
I'll be good . . . I'll be very good . . . I promise. Yes! if you untie me . . . please?

SEWARD
I'm sorry . . . not yet.

RENFIELD
How long? How long will they be kept hostage?

SEWARD
Renfield, that is entirely up to you.
(SEWARD rises.)
Well . . . I must go. I leave you to consider . . .

RENFIELD
Thank you, Doctor. Would you open the window, please?
(SEWARD opens window and exits.
Pause.)

RENFIELD
Can I quench this rush roaring in my mind? It is a
quickening of my self. Every restless muscle is ready to
spring headlong, while my mind races, brutally aware but
withdrawn. I have feasted on the sweet nectar of paradise,
and I am overfilled with life.

(RENFIELD rises from bed. to
daisy)
I hate you Mr. Daisy, you sun eye, with your willy-come
nimble petals. I will pluck them out. All that is left is
a sun in the center, and if I could, I would swallow it
whole.

(RENFIELD begins to dance around
the room.)
Is this it? Is this the answer? Can something so small as
a fly unleash such changes? It must be . . . but how? No
. . . it is better not to question. Wisdom pales to this.
(RENFIELD becomes more animated,
erratic, and increasingly giddy.)

A fly, a fly, a wonderful fly
My eyes, my eyes, multiple eyes
Skitter, skit and rub legs
A jittery ball of nerves
Look up and down and jump
Plotting, planning, scheming, eating
But never committing, ready to dash away
licking, testing, running its tongue
A dabbler, a taster, a drinker of soup
Desiring something sweet and tasty.

Uptight
Easily stunned
Pull off the wings and it’s just a silly little bug
Clean, clean, fastidiously clean.
Washing its hands before eating.

Feel the air and sense the shadows
Whisper and buzz the secrets

Oh Renfield, what do you hear
Is it a conscience, a vice,
Or just something tasty and nice?

So fragile, so frail
So precious

(Pause.)
And with a fly, I’ve only begun.
(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, RENFIELD is sleeping in the window sill. The window and door are open. The two attendants sit at a table, playing Gin Rummy. ATTENDANT 1 finishes dealing.)

ATTENDANT 1
It’s yours, if you want it.

ATTENDANT 2
Hold on a minute. Let me sort them first. No thanks.

ATTENDANT 1
I’ll take it then.

ATTENDANT 2
It’s been fairly quiet today. You know, it was almost pleasant today.

ATTENDANT 1
I’ll say things have been quiet. Quiet since Renfield was wrapped up. The word seemed to spread to the rest of the patients, and they’ve been behaving themselves.

ATTENDANT 2
I wonder how long it’ll last . . .

ATTENDANT 1
Not long, I’m sure. The moon will be full tonight, and if I’ve learned anything here, mad folk are affected even more than the tides.

ATTENDANT 2
Come on, that’s just superstition, you don’t really believe all that stuff, do you?

ATTENDANT 1
Believe it? Of course I believe it. I know what’s true. I can’t explain why the moon causes people to change, but it does. Maybe it is gravity affecting their brain, or something weird with the light.

ATTENDANT 2 (sarcastic)
Maybe the bogeyman shoots moonbeams to strike us down.

ATTENDANT 1
Right . . . If you refuse to see the patterns in front of your face, fine with me, but I’m not so blind.
(Pause.)
Gin. How many have you got?

ATTENDANT 2

Thirteen.

ATTENDANT 1

That's thirty-eight for me. Your deal. Everyone has to believe in something. But what do you believe in?

ATTENDANT 2

I don't go around digging in the dirt or looking up to the sky for answers. The only answers that I've ever found have come from inside. Dusty old words don't mean anything to me. I believe in myself.

(ATTENDANT 2 shuffles and deals. A rolling clatter starts offstage, but the attendants do not react to it. Throughout the scene they continue to play gin.)

How do you put up with this mindless crap every day? I'm getting tired of it already. You've been here what . . .

ATTENDANT 1

Longer than any of the patients. It must be going on near twenty years now. I can't complain, the job puts a roof over my head, feeds me, and gives me something to do with my hands. Idle hands, you know, are the sign of an idle mind.

(The SPIDER, a middle aged woman, wearing a mid Victorian dress, appears at the doorway, pushing what appears to be a small child's bubble-popper -- except that it has eight legs which skitter along as it is pushed, hereafter referred to as the spider puppet. The SPIDER enters RENFIELD's room, and crosses to loom over RENFIELD. The SPIDER pushes the spider puppet up the wall, and nudges RENFIELD brusquely with it.)

SPIDER (cheerful)

Come on! Time to get up. Open those sleepy eyes and get ready. There is much to be done.

Do I have to?

RENFIELD (groggily)
SPIDER
Of course you don't have to. You can sleep as late as you'd like . . . but I'd much prefer that you get up now.

(RENFIELD turns over and opens his eyes.)

RENFIELD (stunned)
It's still dark! It's not even morning yet! And you want me to wake up. Why? What could be so important?

(Pause. The SPIDER starts to speak, hesitates, starts again, halts, then begins.)

SPIDER
I'm concerned about your soul.

RENFIELD
My soul was pleasantly asleep, thank you, until just now.

SPIDER
Precisely my point! Vigilance should be the watchword of your soul, but I'm afraid you've been slipping recently.

(RENFIELD stands up and crosses to sit on the bed.)

RENFIELD
Is five-thirty in the morning the proper time to concern oneself with the soul? Besides what has prompted this pressing concern?

SPIDER
The young woman you were with last night . . .

(The SPIDER sits in the chair.)

RENFIELD
Yes . . . and . . .

SPIDER (nervous)
The two of you were alone . . . unchaperoned?

RENFIELD
I'm old enough to conduct my own affairs . . .

SPIDER
Please. Don't make this any more difficult for me . . . Answer me directly.
RENFIELD

We were alone.

(Pause.)

Quite alone . . .

SPIDER (pressing)

I need to know what happened . . . I must know. Questions are already being asked . . . and soon . . . oh, the scandal of it all! How shall we survive it? We shall. I promise you, but first, I must know exactly what happened.

(The SPIDER prods RENFIELD with the spider puppet.)

There is no other choice. You simply must tell me everything . . .

RENFIELD

Do you want me to say that I am innocent and did nothing? Very well . . . I am not innocent and I --

SPIDER (gasping)

Renfield! She's dead! Do you know that?

RENFIELD (reassuring)

Of course she is . . . I told you that I was there. I would be very foolish indeed not to remember that.

SPIDER

How could you? Your very presence there. People will suspect . . . that . . . that you . . . How can you be so calm?

(Pause.)

You've changed. You are mad. I can see it in your eyes. That is it! You have gone mad. You are not the same --

RENFIELD

Yes, I am. I am no different than the little one who, sitting in your lap, learned to read. I am no different than the little one who you tossed sky high into the air and told to catch the stars.

(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, RENFIELD is sitting on the window sill. The window is open revealing it is night. SEWARD enters. ATTENDANT 2 closes the door behind him. SEWARD is carrying the tea.)
SEWARD
Good evening, RENFIELD. I'm back. I'm sorry that it took a while, but several complications came up that I was forced to attend to.

(SEWARD sets the tea on table.
SEWARD sits.)

RENFIELD (bitterly)
No matter. I didn't expect much more.

SEWARD
I am not your jailer, Renfield. I don't want to see you trussed up. Therefore, I have a proposal for you. I will let you out of the jacket while I am here. This will give you a chance to prove to me that you can behave yourself.

RENFIELD
Oh doctor, that is an excellent idea.

SEWARD
I have not finished. When I leave you must agree to wear the jacket again, until I am satisfied of your behavior.

RENFIELD
Must I put it back on again?
(Pause.)
Very well, I agree. It is better than nothing.

(SEWARD unlaces RENFIELD's strait jacket.)

SEWARD
I've brought you something. I searched for it special, just for you . . .

RENFIELD (eagerly)
What is it?

(SEWARD takes a small leather book from his pocket.)

SEWARD
Here. Look for yourself.

(RENFIELD squeals with delight.)

RENFIELD
SEWARD

If you wish to use it, I must ask that you return the notebook which I loaned you.

RENFIELD

Must I?

SEWARD (sharply)

Yes!

(Pause.)

RENFIELD

No matter. Take it.

(SEWARD quickly stuffs the notebook in his pocket.)

But if I am to be free only in your presence . . . must I write only then? Can I not write on my own?

SEWARD

As soon as you prove that I can trust you, you will be free to write . . . whenever you wish.

RENFIELD

You are trying to tame me, doctor. You would use my life so that others could eat my fat. Well, I refuse to be consumed by society. I seek freedom and life, and they are not found in polite society where the giant must squat for shame of his height. I will not hide myself in the flimsy garment of civilization. But for you, doctor, your modesty is showing.

SEWARD

I have done well for myself. I have won responsibility, the respect of my peers, and most importantly . . . the love of friends. These things give me pleasure --

RENFIELD

But that is precisely the coin which they have used to buy your obedience. When I hunger, I eat, and I am proud to be alive. When I consume a life, I will not snivel and whine. I pounce and relish the life that it adds to me. Every living thing seeks gain for itself, and if it comes at the expense of others, so be it. There is no need to mask this world of terror in a fable of selflessness.

SEWARD

But mercy and love are what separate us from the animals. If everyone were to follow you, we would be nothing more than savages, and every accomplishment would be erased. We reach our dreams through combined effort.
RENFIELD
I would rather stand waist deep in mud and strive for the heavens on my own . . . When rooted to the earth it is easier to measure oneself.

(Pause.)

While you spread your precious life thin, I will hoard it and gather it in. If you will not use your life wisely, then kindly let me take it from you and use it to my benefit. I have nurtured the fragile spark of life and have built it into a raging bonfire. Yet I constantly need more fuel to add, lest the fire burn out and leave only the whitened ashes of my body. I want to see all . . . to know all . . . to consume all . . .

SEWARD
All of this from eating one fly, Renfield. Quite the basis for a theory, I must say.

(Pause.)

And a theory . . . which if you intend to continue . . . Do you intend to continue it?

RENFIELD
Most certainly, doctor. I see no reason to stop now. In fact, I am very eager to continue.

SEWARD
But what happens if you succeed? Yours will be a world of silence. You will live, oh most surely you will live. But no one will disturb your solitude. No one will see your lonely glory. You will have purged your mind of all memories, and will spend your days doing nothing . . . thinking nothing. You have rejected the selflessness of society, but you have been charmed by the selflessness of solitude. No. Your way does not lead toward immortality but rather toward hell.

(Pause.)

I will not follow you, and if I were you I would turn before I fell into the abyss.

RENFIELD
You now speak of faith, doctor, please do not discuss it. You are welcome to your messiah. I will not deny you of him. To me, it seems folly to pin one’s hopes of immortality on someone else. Your arguments are tired.

(SEWARD starts, as if to speak.)

I know them before you can say them. I have heard them all so many times before . . .

(Pause. RENFIELD covers his face with his hands.)
(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, SEWARD and RENFIELD are as they were before the blackout. The SPIDER, with her spider puppet stands in front of RENFIELD. RENFIELD slowly lowers his hands from his face as the lights slowly rise.)

SPIDER (exasperated)

What do you mean that you no longer believe? Tell me that.

RENFIELD

Precisely what I said. I need more substantial proof.

SEWARD (puzzled)

Pardon, Renfield?

(SEWARD begins to take notes.)

SPIDER

What proof do you need? Christ promised, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. Those who believe in me will never die."

RENFIELD

And where did you get that from? Out of another book! You are too clever for your own good . . . beware of being so gullible.

SPIDER

Did I not teach you to believe?

RENFIELD

Yes you did, but you also taught me to think. The two have proven incompatible.

SPIDER

What did I do to deserve this from you? What am I to do with you?

RENFIELD

Do? You needn’t do anything with me. As for deserving it, did you not teach me that the sins of the parents are visited upon the children. What then have you done to make me deserve this? What sin have I inherited from you? Tell me that.

SPIDER

Don’t concern yourself with me . . . what is more pressing is your problem. There will be questions and you will be
SPIDER (Cont.)

expected to give answers. Are you prepared to give them?
Are you prepared to face judgement?

RENFIELD

Justice is a lie. A way of pulling down those bold enough to live.

SPIDER

Renfield, consider what might happen to you... does that not frighten you? If you repent and ask for mercy... Have you forgotten all that I have taught you?

RENFIELD

No, I have not forgotten.

(Pause.)

You do not believe me? Then let me prove it to you...

(Pause. During the speech, the SPIDER’s initial approval turns to surprise, and then growing shock and horror. At the end, the SPIDER is shaking visibly.)

A man had a son. The son asked the father for what was coming to him, so that he could set off in the world. The father complied, and gave to the son his inheritance. And so the son, set off for distant lands... but on the way he was beset by robbers who stripped him of his wealth, beat him, and left him to die. He would have died, except another traveller took pity on him, cared for his wounds, and lodged him in an inn. When the young man recovered... he was penniless, and he was in dire need. He was afraid to return to his father, so he hired himself out to one of the local landowners, who sent him to care for his large herd of swine. He watched after the swine carefully while they were feeding on a hillside... suddenly, as if possessed, the swine charged down the bluff into the lake, where all two thousand drowned... The young man said "Surely, I have sinned against God and man." Fearing that his master might kill him, the young man fled home saying, "at least there I will be treated as one of his servants." The young man returned to his home, and found his father... absent and the land leased to tenant farmers who were harvesting the grapes. The tenants recognized their landlord’s son and before he could speak, they seized him and killed him.

(Pause.)

SPIDER

(muttering in protest)

No that’s wrong... all wrong! That is not what I taught you. You’ve twisted them.
RENFIELD
Therefore, ask not for what is coming to you, lest your
harvest prove bountiful.

(The SPIDER is struggling to
stand.)

SPIDER (bitter)
You . . . monster! You are not my son! In the face of . .
of . . . you torment me . . .
(Pause. pleading)
Why must you be so stubborn? Here we are in the midst of .
. . Won’t you help me?

RENFIELD
You don’t look at all well. Come, sit down.
(RENFIELD leads the SPIDER to the
bed. The SPIDER drags the spider
puppet behind her.)
There. That feels better doesn’t it?

(The SPIDER is shaking even more.)

SPIDER (fading)
Won’t you help me? Everything will work out right. We will
manage. Why will you not help me? . . .

RENFIELD
Hush . . . hush . . . no more words . . .

(The SPIDER is holding onto the
spider puppet tightly. RENFIELD
slowly opens her hand and takes the
spider puppet from her. The SPIDER
straightens in shock, gasps, and
then slumps against RENFIELD.)

(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, RENFIELD
is sitting on the bed with his
hands covering his face, and SEWARD
is sitting in the chair taking
notes.)

SEWARD (quickly)
What was that you just put in your mouth, Renfield?
(Pause.)
Come on, I saw you. Tell me what it was.
(RENFIELD smiles.)
Don’t give me that grin. Out with it.
RENFIELD
Nothing very much, doctor.
   (secretive)
A spider!

SEWARD
A spider! Renfield, what more? When will this end? How long are you going to try to live --

RENFIELD
Now don’t be jealous. If you want one, you will have to find your own.

SEWARD
I would prefer that you ate something more healthy for you.

RENFIELD
Did you ever look at what you were eating? Look closely . . . it is the empty husk of life. How more vital is the juice, that which holds the spark itself. The blood is the life . . .

SEWARD
But the blood is also the soul, Renfield. Are you interested in souls as well?

RENFIELD
Oh no, I want no souls. Life is all that I want.

SEWARD
But you cannot take the life without the soul. They are inseparable.

RENFIELD
But I want no souls. I have no use for them! I cannot eat or drink them, and they add nothing to my life. Perhaps, doctor, when the life is gone, they fly away, like a butterfly.

SEWARD
And where would they go?

RENFIELD
That’s none of my concern. I will not be held accountable for souls.

SEWARD
But you must be, for I tell you there is no way to take the life without the soul.
RENFIELD
No! I will not be held responsible. You must be wrong, for it is utterly impossible to take a soul.

SEWARD
But you must be. You have taken on a grave responsibility. Not only must you answer for your own actions and life, but also an accounting will be demanded for those whose lifeblood you have consumed.

RENFIELD
No! I do not believe your words!

SEWARD
Deny them if you like. I will not make you accept them, but I ask that you consider them . . .

(Pause.)
And I can see by your face that you are . . .

(Pause. RENFIELD starts, as if to speak.)
Don’t talk about it. Let your head rest for a while.

(Pause.)
Your tea is getting cold, would you like to drink it before I go?

RENFIELD
Take it away . . . I do not want it.

SEWARD
Very well.

(SEWARD crosses to the door and knocks. ATTENDANT 2 opens the door.)
He no longer wants his tea. More importantly, will you help him back into his strait jacket?

RENFIELD
No!

ATTENDANT 2
Certainly.

(ATTENDANT 2 enters and begins putting a despondent RENFIELD into the strait jacket. SEWARD observes.)

SEWARD
Now, Renfield, remember your promise.

RENFIELD
You are cruel. You lied.
SEWARD
I did no such thing. I am pleased with today's progress, but there is still much more work to do yet.

(ATTENDANT 2 finishes tying the strait jacket.)

ATTENDANT 2
There. You are all tucked in. Safe and snug.

(RENFIELD hisses at ATTENDANT 2.)

SEWARD
Now, Renfield, if you want to be out of the jacket, that is not the way to go about it. You must show more respect to my attendants.

RENFIELD (softly)
Goons!

SEWARD
My attendants are not goons, Renfield, and when you stop treating them as such, you will be free. Then you can write in your book, or sip tea in your window. You would like that?

(Pause.)
We must go now . . . Remember what we talked about . . .

(SEWARD and ATTENDANT 2 exit.
ATTENDANT 2 carries the tea.)

Call if you need anything.

(SEWARD turns back to RENFIELD at door.)

There is still hope.

(SEWARD exits. The door is closed.)

RENFIELD (shouting)
No. There can't be!

(Pause. softly)
For some things, there is no forgiveness.

(BLACKOUT)

(It is late at night. The shutters are open. A thunderstorm is raging. RENFIELD is sprawled in bed, asleep. The FLY and SPIDER enter carrying tall ceremonial candles. The FLY sits on RENFIELD's chest, and the SPIDER
stands at the foot of the bed. The
FLY softly chants in Latin,
throughout, at points rising in
volume alone. During the scene,
the storm builds, with thunder and
lightning.)

FLY (alone)
Quia Renfieldus diábolo suadénte, christiánam promissiónem,
quam in Baptísmo proféssus est, per apostásiam postpónens,

FLY (underneath)
Ecclésiam Dei devástáre, ecclesiástica bona dirípere ac
paúperes Christi violénter opprímere non verétur; idcórco
sollíciti, ne per negligentiam pastorálem péréat, pro quo in
treméndo judício, ante Príncipem Pastórum Dóminum nostrum
Jesum Christum . . .

SPIDER
Woe to thee, O son of Cain, for you have defied the
commandment of the Lord God most high. He has decreed: You
may slaughter and eat to your heart’s desire, but do not
partake of the blood; for the blood is life, and you shall
not consume this seat of life with the flesh.

RENFIELD
I have done no such thing. You have mistaken me.

FLY (alone)
Si non annuntiáveris iníquo iníquitátem suam, sánquínem ejus
de manu tua requíram . . .

FLY (underneath)
. . . monúimus eum canónicè, primo, secúndo, tértio, et
étiam quarto, ad ejus malítiam convincéndam, ipsum ad
emendátiónum, satisfactiónum, et poeníténtiam invítántes, et
patérno affectu corripiéntes. Ipse vero, proh dolor!

SPIDER
Woe to thee, misbegotten one, better that you had never been
born, rather than to grow and curse the light. The blood
which stains your hands and heart cries out to the Lord
against you. Know that He has promised that those who
disobey him shall be cut off and shall perish from the
earth. Have you defied the Lord’s command and eaten that
which He has forbidden you?

RENFIELD
I tell you, I have harmed no man.
FLY (alone)
Si manus tua vel pes tuus scandalízat te, absçinde eum, et prójice abs te.

FLY (underneath)
Et Ioánnes præ cétëris diléctus Christi discípulus, talem nefárium hóminem salutáre pröhíbet, dicens: Nolíte recipere eum in domum nec AVÆ ei díxéritis. Qui enim dicit illi AVÆ, communicat opéribus ejus malignis . . .

SPIDER
Woe to thee, evildoer, for the blood of man and beast is one blood. In the eyes of the Lord, there is no difference between beast or man, man has no advantage over the beast; such things are vanity and will be blown away. Surely, those souls which circle you are not your own.

FLY (alone)
Membrum pútridum et insanábile, quod medicínam non récipit, ferro excommunicátiónis ab Ecclésiæ córporë abscindámus . . .

FLY (underneath)
. . . Quia culpam suam nec cogitavit, nec conféssus est, nec missa legatióne excusatiónem áliquam præténdit, nec véniam postulavit, sed diábolo cor ejus indurante, in incóepta malítia perseverat, juxta quod Apóstolus dicit . . .

SPIDER
Woe to the evildoer who ignores the precepts of the Lord. Vain are his proud attempts to become the equal of the Almighty. For such is an abomination to the Lord, and He will strike him down, and all of his hopes and works will be reduced to rubble and come to nought and he himself will become ashes. His name shall be struck from the Book of Life.

FLY (alone)
et potestáte ligándi et solvéndi in cælo et in terra nobis divínitús colláta, a pretiósí Córporis et Sánquinis Dómini perceptione et excommunicátum et anathematizátem esse decérnimus; et damnátum cum diábolo, et ángelis ejus, et ómnibus réprobis in ignem átérnum judicámus.

SPIDER and FLY
Fiat. Fiat. Fiat.

(Intense lightning flash. The SPIDER and FLY extinguish their candles, upending them. The set is plunged into complete darkness.)
RENFIELD
Mercy, Mercy, Mercy. I am innocent!

(Thunder. RENFIELD screams.)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 3

SETTING: RENFIELD’s room.

AT RISE: It is several hours after dawn. The shutters are open, but the sun does not shine through, for the storm continues. The room is dimly lit. RENFIELD is asleep in the bed. The door is open. SEWARD is talking to ATTENDANT 1.

ATTENDANT 1
You should have heard him last night. Between him and the storm, I doubt that anyone on the floor slept well last night. He was yelling for almost two hours . . . I thought that it would never end.

SEWARD
What was he yelling about?

ATTENDANT 1
Well that’s the funny part . . . Most of the time, I couldn’t make sense of what he was saying. It seemed another language, altogether. But whatever it was, I could tell what he meant. The words may have been different, but my ears know what suffering sounds like. I don’t know what is bothering him . . . and since that is your job and not mine, I’ll leave you alone and get to my work.

(ATTAENDANT 1 exits. Pause. SEWARD enters and sits on window sill. SEWARD becomes lost in his musings. RENFIELD wakes. He is dazed. In the following, the cueing between the monologues should be brisk.)

SEWARD (reflecting)
Sleepless night . . . Flies and spiders . . . and . . . not only him, but I as well. I find that during the day my mind always returns to him.

RENFIELD
(RENFIELD sits up.)
Is this hell? It looks like it.

SEWARD
I trudge through my duties, while I eagerly await the time that I can come here to see him. Where will he go next? What will his madness lead to, I wonder?
RENFIELD
It's not any different than before.

SEWARD
I can only guess, for he is both my subject and guide. I have been eager, pushing him forward . . . to see what we might discover. Last night we stood, overlooking an abyss which . . .

RENFIELD
(noticing SEWARD)
He's here . . . Could he be . . . Nah!

SEWARD
He had shown me -- Yet, I could tell that he had not wanted to go there. He did not want to enter . . . he balked . . .

RENFIELD
But maybe hell begins where you left off . . .

SEWARD
So I pushed him in. For his own good . . . So that he might recover. But now, as he sleeps, I wonder . . . have I pushed him too hard . . . too quickly? What harm is there if during his treatment, I am able to publish a paper about him?

RENFIELD
He seems lost. Perhaps I should help him.

SEWARD
He needs me, or I think he does, but am I only using him? He has become a ghost in my mind, and I must find a way to drive him out. But at what price . . .

RENFIELD (brightly)
Seward! That's my window that you are in!

SEWARD
(realizing RENFIELD is awake)
Oh!

RENFIELD
I hope it served you well . . .

SEWARD
Good morning, Renfield, I was waiting for you to wake up.

RENFIELD
Peeping in on me? No matter.
SEWARD
How do you feel this morning?
(RENFIELD shrugs his shoulders.)
Did you sleep well?

RENFIELD
Doctor, I didn’t sleep very well last night.

SEWARD
Yes, I heard. What was it?

RENFIELD
My ghosts have invaded my dreams. They are not pleased with our attempts to drive them out. I warned you that they wouldn’t let go so easily. They’ve damned me and now they are going to torment me. They will haunt my dreams, and give me no peace by day or night.

(Pause.)
Doctor, I am afraid to sleep. If they continue for long, they will break me . . .

SEWARD
Obviously, Renfield, you need something to divert your mind. We need to fight the ghosts . . . but how?

RENFIELD
Give me my hands and my book!

The book isn’t enough --

RENFIELD
What do you want? First you give me the book, then you keep it from me, and now you say it isn’t enough. I don’t see how you decide these things.

SEWARD
No. I’m thinking of a different line of attack, altogether. Instead of focusing on the ghosts, we will fill your mind with other things. But I can not be with you all day . . . nor can the attendants. What I am thinking is that you need a pet, and the more I think about it . . . Yes.

RENFIELD (incredulous)
A pet? You are joking! After I . . . You are willing to trust me with a pet? Doctor, I am supposed to be the mad one.

SEWARD
I think that a pet might be good for you. It would teach you responsibility. I was thinking about a cat.
RENFIELD
But doctor, I already am answerable for enough souls, I do not even want to be accountable for my own. It is too stained. I don’t want any more. What if I . . .

SEWARD
You must see that you don’t. Perhaps a kitten . . . You could keep it here in your room. You would have to take care of it well, feed it, and make sure that you gave it plenty of attention. By giving a home to a lonely animal and treating it well, you could clean some of your own soul.

RENFIELD
But I would still be responsible for it. I do not want to tempt myself further. No thank you, doctor.

SEWARD
Well, think about it Renfield . . . you needn’t agree immediately. We will set it aside and talk about it later, no?

(Pause.)
Good. Now, don’t draw such a long face. There’s hope, I tell you. I got a letter today . . . one I think that might interest you. She is very concerned about you, and she is coming to visit you tomorrow.

She? Who is it?

SEWARD
Do you remember Mina?

RENFIELD
Of course I do.

(Pause.)
It was her!

Her?

SEWARD (puzzled)

RENFIELD (determined)

She sent me here.

(Pause.)
Don’t deny it. I know that it must be her. No one else would . . . pretend to care. Besides, it fits her precisely. Her and her meddling. Always claiming to watch out for everyone’s best interest.

SEWARD
And if it was?
RENFIELD

Keep her away . . . please.

SEWARD

Now Renfield, what ever for? She is very eager to see you.

RENFIELD

Hers is the ghost that I want to escape most of all. Now you want to bring her here? I don’t want her to see me like this. Maybe later, as you say, when I get better, but please . . . not now. Please don’t mistake me, doctor, I am very fond of her . . . too fond . . . but I . . . tell her anything, but please keep her away . . . for a little while . . .

SEWARD

I will try . . . but I had thought her visit would do you good.

(ATTENDANT 1 enters, carrying several files.)

ATTENDANT 1

Here you are, doctor. I didn’t realize you were still here.

What time is it?

SEWARD

It is now seven-thirty. That is why I was looking for you.

Thank you. (Pause.) Renfield, I need to get going. I have many things which --

RENFIELD

I understand, doctor, but before you go, can I ask you a favor?

SEWARD

What is it?

RENFIELD

Will you let me out of this . . . thing?

SEWARD

I suppose. It is not doing you any good. (to ATTENDANT 1)

See to it.

(SEWARD exits. ATTENDANT 1 unties the strait jacket.)
ATTENDANT 1

There now. How does that feel?
(RENFIELD swings his arms about in excitement.)

Well now, you look happy.
(Pause.)

Say . . . the rain seems to be letting up. How about I open your window to let in the breeze?
(RENFIELD does not answer.
ATTENDANT 1 opens the window.)

You are awfully quiet today, and I am just a chatterbox, I suppose. Oh well, back to work.

(ATTENDANT 1 exits and closes door.)

(BLACKOUT)

(When the lights return, RENFIELD is sitting on the window sill. It is night, and the window is open. The storm has calmed to a steady rain.)

RENFIELD (calling)

Seward!
(Pause.)
Seward!

(ATTENDANT 2 enters. The door remains open.)

Yes?

ATTENDANT 2

Go away. I want Seward.

RENFIELD (sulking)

ATTENDANT 2

He’s away. What do you want?

(The CAT, dressed in a black early-Victorian dress, enters the room, riding on a stick-cat, which is similar to a child’s stick-horse. Hereafter, the stick-cat will be referred to as the cat puppet. RENFIELD notices the CAT and gasps.)

RENFIELD

Brutus, look!
ATTENDANT 2
(turning, puzzled)
What? If you don't want anything, I'm leaving.
Just keep quiet, will you? No more screeching . . .
understand?

(ATTENDANT 2 exits and closes door.
The CAT sits in the chair, while
the cat puppet waves back and forth
in front of RENFIELD's face.)

CAT
Hello, Renfield.

RENFIELD
Is it your turn to torment me tonight?

CAT (innocently)
Torment you? I? Would I ever do such a thing? Shame on
you for thinking so!
(Pause.)
But if you must know, I must admit that I do enjoy it.

RENFIELD
Fine. If that is what must be, get started please.

CAT
Be patient. There is no rush . . . We have all night.
Let's draw this out, shall we.
(Long pause.)
You disappoint me. I had great hope for you once. I
thought that you had your head on right and that you would
do good with yourself. But no, you've become violent
striking out anything that tries to love you. You stubborn
ingrate. Must you crush anyone who gets too close to you?
What harm have they done you?

RENFIELD
They didn't love me. No one loved me. It was all a lie.

CAT
With an attitude like that, I'm not surprised . . . but in
spite of it people still have found a way to care about you.
Although I am not sure how . . . I still care about you.

RENFIELD
I didn't ask for your love . . . take it back.

CAT
No. I refuse.
RENFIELD (stronger)

Take it back!

CAT

I don’t know how. Even if I did, I wouldn’t. I’ve never seen someone as stubborn about such things. I suppose even when you were little, you were that way. You always grumbled and got this queer look on your face whenever anyone tried to praise you. I remember the time that . . .

RENFIELD (aside)

She’s losing her mind . . . telling and retelling the same stories from the past.

CAT

Well good. At least you’ve taken the time to notice what I do. At least I have your attention. What are my stories about?

RENFIELD

Distant relatives of yours, long since dead, which I never met, and really could care less about. It seems that you spend more time living with them than you do in the real world.

CAT

That was the real world. That was where this world has come from, and I am trying to tell you your part in it so that you can understand. I want you to pass them on . . . I want you to make new stories of your own. Once a story is told, part of it is always remembered. Not all is forgotten. If you seek to trace life back to its origin, you must look through story. That is the part that is immortal. To create a story you can’t exclude yourself from the world . . . You must be an actor, an interpreter, and you need an audience . . .

(Pause.)

You asked if this was hell. No this is not hell, but merely a waiting room. In hell there are many stories, but no one is willing to listen. The story of the solitary self ends.

(Pause.)

You doubt me. You are silent.

(The FLY and SPIDER enter with their puppets. The FLY, SPIDER and CAT pull RENFIELD from the window and circle him.)

Let us show you what hell is like.

(RENFIELD covers his ears and screams.)

(BLACKOUT)
(When the lights return, RENFIELD is sitting on the window sill. The window is open, it is early morning, and the storm has calmed to a gentle rain.)

RENFIELD

The fragile glass of life, housed within this frame, has cracked. It rattles as the howling wind tears through my soul. The outer world and my private terrors join together in a furious dance, whirling and blurring. Yet it was my stretching of the frame which caused the glass to break. Mine was the hand which disobeyed. If your hand offends you, cut it off. Yet it was not just my hand but my heart and my mind as well, my whole self. What do I do? I have sought divinity and achieved instead damnation. Crack the glass. Shatter it! Let the two worlds intermingle for a brief and glorious second, and then when the shards have hit the floor, let me be swept away. If eternal doom is my future, then at least I head into it with open eyes. Yet I had hoped . . . Even now, as I reach to . . . my hand pulls back. No, I should not hesitate, I have taken souls, and now my soul is required . . .

(The door is opened by ATTENDANT 2. Enter SEWARD and MINA. MINA is played by the same actress as the CAT. She is an elderly woman wearing a black early Victorian dress, and she carries a knitting bag.)

RENFIELD

Doctor, what is she doing here?

MINA

Doctor Seward tried to convince me that after I made the long trip up here that it would be better after all if I didn’t see you. Well, I knew right away that something was up.

SEWARD (apologizing)

I’m sorry, Renfield, I tried, but she . . .

MINA

You look pale Renfield. Haven’t you been eating?

(to ATTENDANT 2)

Bring him some dinner.

ATTENDANT 2

I’m afraid it would be a waste of time, ma’am. He doesn’t eat much.
MINA
Doesn’t he? That will have to change.

RENFIELD
I don’t want anything to eat.

MINA
Don’t listen to him. Bring some dinner, I’ll see that he eats it. Doctor Seward, if I could have a few minutes with him . . .

SEWARD
Are you sure that is wise?

MINA
I don’t think there will be any problems.

ATTENDANT 2
Careful, ma’am. He’s been a bit restless lately.

SEWARD
(to ATTENDANT 2)
Keep your thoughts to yourself.
(to MINA)
We will wait outside . . . If you need anything, call us.

MINA
Thank you, dear. I’m quite sure that I’ll be fine.

SEWARD
(to ATTENDANT 2)
Come with me.

(ATTENDANT 2 looks to SEWARD and shrugs his shoulders. ATTENDANT 2 and SEWARD exit and close the door.)

MINA
Renfield, what are you doing in the window? You might hurt yourself.

RENFIELD
I must atone for my deeds.

MINA
By throwing yourself out a window? Defenestration is certainly an unusual method of atonement.

RENFIELD
My life is required of me. I must . . . make amends . . .
MINA
It is not as easy to do yourself in as you think. See that
tree down below? You'd get caught up in it. It would break
your fall and several bones, and you would be stuck there
until someone came to get you down. You'd be paralyzed, but
you'd most definitely still be alive, and if you are having
troubles living with guilt now, I assure you that it would
be much worse then.

RENFIELD
There is blood on my hands. I can not live with it any
longer. Let me die!

MINA
Certainly not. I won't allow it.

(MINA sits down, and pulls out her
knitting.)

RENFIELD
Am I not free to choose my own death?

(MINA works with winding a skein of
yarn.)

MINA
It's not as simple as you think.

(ATTEANDANT 2 enters with meal.)
Here's dinner for you, Renfield.

(ATTEANDANT 2 sets the tray on the
table.)

RENFIELD
I don't want dinner. I'm not hungry.

(ATTEANDANT 2 shrugs his shoulders
and leaves.)

MINA
Forget you are not hungry, and eat anyway.

RENFIELD
But . . .

MINA (commanding)
Eat.

(RENFIELD eats.)
It'll do you some good.

(Pause.)
MINA (Cont.)
You’ve kept inside of you far too much for too long. It’s
time to let it go.

RENFIELD
But I can’t just let it go.

MINA
Now just look at this skein of thread!

(RENFIELD is eating with abandon.)

What of it?

RENFIELD
A tangle has gotten into it and I am going to have to sort
it out.
(Pause.)
Do you remember how you would help me when you were young?
We’d sort out the tangles together?
(RENFIELD screams.)
Hush, you’ll disturb the neighbors.

RENFIELD
To hell with the neighbors, they’re all mad . . .

MINA
Well, by the looks of it, so are you, so there’s no need to
go criticizing your peers.

What are you making?

RENFIELD
That’s your problem--always looking to the future. What
will happen? You’ve got less an eye on what is happening
and you never pay any attention to what is really important
. . . what happened.

RENFIELD
How can you prattle on about yarn?

MINA
You and this yarn have more in common just now than you
think.
(Pause.)

RENFIELD
What am I supposed to do?
MINA
Well, that's easy. Do what you've always done, go on living.

RENFIELD
But I don't know how. I don't know how to live any more.

MINA
Well, that's quite a twist. Here, hold still, we'll work this tangle out.

RENFIELD
But the ghosts in my mind . . .

MINA
You must tell stories to become free of the ghosts. I would have them too, if I tried to keep them bottled up within me. They become annoyed with you because they want their freedom. You will never get rid of them, because they are continually replaced, but you can at least keep them quiet and content.

RENFIELD
Are you . . . Can you . . . Will you . . .

MINA
You have too many questions. You need something to keep your mind active. Dr. Seward mentioned to me his idea of getting a kitten for you. I think that he has a good idea . . . and I've always been partial to cats, myself.

(Pause.)
There now, the storm seems to have passed over us, and it will turn out to be a nice morning after all, a bit muddy perhaps, but water and mud make things green. How about we go for a short walk together out in the garden?

RENFIELD
Outside? In the sun?

MINA
Of course you photophobe, staying inside all of the time won't do you any good at all. You must breathe the fresh air and feel the mud squish between your toes, and you need to see the green of life.

RENFIELD
But what will happen afterward? Am I to sit here taking care of a kitten forever? I'm not satisfied.

MINA
Of course you are not. I will come back and visit you again. In the mean time, you must learn to fill your time
MINA (Cont.)

with the people around you. Don’t be so foolish as to ignore them, dear.

RENFIELD

But I want to get rid of you. I’m tired of seeing and hearing you.

MINA

More nonsense, dear. I am as much a part of you as you are of me. You can’t get rid of me by merely wishing it. I’m not that easy . . . I’m stubborn. You mustn’t be so strong headed. One can never get away from one’s past. You must learn to live with it . . . together. Now we are willing to put up with you, but you must learn to put up with us.

RENFIELD (desperate)

I am not satisfied!

MINA

You needn’t be satisfied. That will come. In time, but if you really do want to find a way out -- out from the torment your mind has been giving you, you will have to.

RENFIELD

But why . . . why did you send me here?

MINA

It is only after visiting the abyss that we can appreciate the gardens of this world. Now come on, wipe that pout off your face.

(MINA knocks on the door. SEWARD and ATTENDANT 2 answer quickly by opening the door.)

Hello jackrabbits. I’ve suggested to Renfield that he might enjoy a walk outside . . .

ATTENDANT 2

Him? He doesn’t like the outside ma’am.

SEWARD (sternly)

(to ATTENDANT 2)

Will you either keep your mouth closed or leave, please?

(to MINA)

He wants to go outside?

MINA

Well actually, I suggested it to him, and he hasn’t refused. Doctor Seward, I would like to take him out, with your permission.
SEWARD
Do you want to go outside, Renfield?

(Pause.)

RENFIELD
I think I do. After all, she might be right. It might help.

SEWARD
Then you may go out. Mina and I will go with you.
(triumphantly)
See! I told you that she would do you some good.

RENFIELD (considering)
Perhaps.

(All exit, and the door is closed. The lights fade, except for the daylight which comes through the window. The sky is a clear, cloudless blue, and the tree at last can be seen clearly. On every branch, frail hints of green peep out to see the morning sun. With time, they could become new leaves. Perhaps.)

(END OF SCENE)

(THE END)