

## F.W. Murnau, *Nosferatu* (1922)

### Abstract

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This clip from F.W. Murnau's classic 1922 silent film *Nosferatu* illustrates some of the innovative uses of light, framing, and storytelling that helped to establish it as a masterpiece of German expressionism and a forerunner of the horror genre. Its indelible protagonist, Count Orlok, based on Bram Stoker's character Dracula, has shaped how audiences imagine vampires to this day, with his pointed ears, hunched back, hollowed eyes, and stalactite teeth. In the film, real estate agent Thomas Hutter (Gustav von Wangenheim) visits Count Orlok (Max Schreck), a new client searching for a property in the fictional port city of Wisborg. When Hutter travels to Transylvania to secure Orlok's signature on the deed, he realizes only too late that he has made a deal with a vampire. In this clip, near the end of the film, Orlok has arrived in Wisborg and begun to terrorize its people. Hutter's wife Ellen (Greta Schröder) decides that only she can kill Orlok—knowing that she will die in the process—by seducing him in her bedroom until the morning sun reduces him to smoke and ash. Fellow filmmakers have admired Murnau's novel use of montage and his interplay of light and shadow in *Nosferatu*. Based on this film's critical acclaim and the successes of two later Murnau films, *Der letzte Mann* in 1924 (released in the U.S. as *The Last Laugh*) and *Faust* in 1926, F.W. Murnau emigrated to southern California in 1926. There he made motion pictures for Fox Studios, part of a wave of German film pioneers who had started moving to Hollywood long before 1933, but which accelerated rapidly after the Nazi takeover.

### Source

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Intertitles:

[Ellen reads book about vampires] "There is no other rescue, unless a woman, entirely without sin, could make the vampire forget the first crow of the cock at dawn. She would have to give him her blood without compulsion."

Riddled by fear, the city searched for a scapegoat: it was Knock.

[Old woman] "He has been seen! He ran out of the house! He strangled the guard..."  
"He strangled him...that vampire!"

[Ellen is shown embroidering "I love you"]

[...]

[Ellen collapses in her husband's arms]. Hutter: "Bulwer! Get Dr. Bulwer!"

Knock has been captured.

Nosferatu drinks Ellen's blood and misses the break of dawn. The cock crows.

[Knock in prison cell] "The master...the master!"

Nosferatu is burned to dust by the rising sun.

Knock: "The master...is...dead."

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Source: *Nosferatu*, dir. F.W. Murnau, Prana-Film GmbH, 1922. wikimedia commons:  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nosferatu>

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