

personal english



Book #21 *The Vampyre*

John William Polidori

Geneva, Switzerland, June **1816**. During one of the **coldest summers ever**, a group of British expats gathered at Villa Diodati, hosted by **Lord Byron**. Back then, Byron was a controversial poet who had been forced to leave London on account of the scandal caused by his affair with his half-sister, **Augusta Leigh**, which had also caused his marriage to **Isabella Milbanke** to collapse. Another scandalous couple on the run would later join Byron – namely, **Percy Bysshe Shelley** and his lover **Mary Wollstonecraft**. Mary was the daughter of political philosopher William Godwin and of feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, and she had eloped with Shelley without her parents' consent. She had also brought along her stepsister **Claire Clairmont**, who would soon become Byron's lover and bear him a daughter, Allegra. Since Mary, too, came back from Switzerland pregnant with Shelley's lovechild, Clara, we can gather that a lot of **lovmaking** went on that summer, along with huge consumption of **laudanum** and **writing frenzy**. Inspired by the awful weather, Mary authored **Frankenstein** while **John William Polidori**, Byron's physician, wrote the first vampire novel ever, **The Vampyre**, which would be published in 1819.



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