

Vlad  
by  
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Sometimes the man is greater than the myth.

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We pan over a map of fifteenth century EUROPE settling in the east over the RIVER DANUBE. North of the river lies WALLACHIA, MOLDAVIA, TRANSILVANIA and HUNGARY. To the South, the sprawling territories of the OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

Over this runs script.

Two hundred years after the Holy Crusades began, the Ottoman Empire went on a fierce campaign to expand its borders and spread the teachings of Islam.

In response, the kings of Eastern Europe joined together to create a royal fraternity, sworn to protect all Christians and oppose the advance of the Infidel.

This fraternity called themselves the Order of the Dragon.

As we fade to black, a FLASH OF LIGHT erupts followed by rumbling BOOM and CANNON FIRE explodes into the night.

INT. PRINCE'S BED CHAMBERS, CASTLE - NIGHT

A young boy wakes with a jolt from a bad dream, gasping for breath. He struggles to regain his composure, looking over to his YOUNGER BROTHER who sleeps soundly across the room.

A CRUCIFIX above the boy's bed draws his attention. Then the silence is broken as an imposing MAN enters the room.

The man is dressed for battle, two large PENDANTS hang around his neck. A CRUCIFIX and a GOLD DISK engraved with an elaborate DRAGON INSIGNIA.

This is DRACUL, king of WALLACHIA. The boy is his son, VLAD.

VLAD

Why are you dressed for battle?

DRACUL

The Ottoman are here.

This sends a shiver down Vlad's spine.

DRACUL (CONT'D)

We are prepared for them. Never before has the Sultan encountered a force the likes of the Dragon he faces now. And never again will he.

Vlad holds his father's gaze, awed by his intensity.

DRACUL (CONT'D)  
Stay close to the castle while I am  
gone and be good to your brother.

VLAD  
I will.

Dracul kisses his son and turns to leave.

VLAD (CONT'D)  
Be careful, father.

DRACUL  
Kings do not fear death Vlad, for  
we are guaranteed a place in  
heaven. In return we must do all  
that we can for our people and  
country.

Dracul regards his son for a moment longer before leaving.  
Vlad looks back to the crucifix, silently crossing himself.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

Dracul gallops through the night accompanied by the ROYAL  
GUARD, the air around them is filled by a DEAFENING THUNDER.  
As they crest a hill they get their first glimpse of the  
RIVER DANUBE below and the source of the noise.

SIXTY OTTOMAN WAR SHIPS are anchored a thousand feet from  
WALLACHIA, giving a frightening demonstration of their new  
firepower. Two hundred CANNONS bombard the shore.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

Dracul makes his way through the Christian camp entering the  
WAR TENT where he finds his brother-in-law and king of  
neighboring MOLDAVIA, BOGDAN. He too wears a DRAGON PENDANT.

BOGDAN  
I knew we couldn't trust those  
slippery bastards.

DRACUL  
What are you talking about?

BOGDAN  
We're the only ones here!

DRACUL  
We took an oath, they'll be here.

BOGDAN  
Just in time to bury us.

A wave of doubt washes over Dracul. He shakes it off.

DRACUL  
They'll be here.

Through the cacophony of cannon fire cuts the piercing caw of an EAGLE.

EXT. MOUNTAINS, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad walks in the mountains with his brother RADU and cousin STEPHEN, aged seven and fourteen respectively. The eagle hovers above.

VLAD  
Moldavia is half our size,  
obviously that means your army is  
half our size.

STEPHEN  
Maybe we just seem bigger because  
we're so much tougher.

Vlad scoffs, watching the eagle land in a tree close by.

RADU  
How big is the Ottoman army?

STEPHEN  
Massive. Bigger than all the Dragon  
armies combined.

Vlad shoots Stephen a disapproving look.

VLAD  
But they are filthy unruly  
heathens Radu and we have God on  
our side. We'll destroy them.

Vlad motions to the eagle, ending the conversation. Stephen quickly lines up an easy shot but Vlad pushes down his bow.

STEPHEN  
What are you doing?

VLAD

Any fool can shoot an eagle. To  
catch one alive takes real skill.

STEPHEN

And you think you can?

VLAD

(Picking up a stone)  
Trick is to hit him in the chest,  
knock the wind out of him.

Vlad throws the stone hitting the bird square in the chest.  
As the Eagle plummets to the ground, Vlad sprints in its  
direction, leaping from a cliff and falling from sight.

Radu and Stephen run to the cliff edge and nervously peer  
over the side. Vlad stands on a ledge fifteen feet below  
holding the dazed eagle.

STEPHEN

Show off.

Vlad lets the bird go, delighting in watching it soar away.

VLAD

You two are going to have to jump  
down here.

STEPHEN

Are you mad? I'm not jumping that.

VLAD

I can't get back up there.

STEPHEN

Then you'll have to walk back  
alone, serves you right for showing  
off.

Suddenly Radu barrels up and jumps. Vlad catches him sending  
them both tumbling to the ground, laughing like hyenas.

VLAD

You see? It's easy. Radu can do it.

Stephen is embarrassed but he cannot force himself to jump.

STEPHEN

I'm going back to the castle.

VLAD

Do you know the way? Stephen?

Stephen disappears without answering. Vlad and Radu share a guilty smile.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Nice jump.

RADU

Thanks.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DAY

The Ottoman boats have moved forward, their cannons now bombard the camp. Christian soldiers line the bank of the Danube trying to prevent them from mooring. Heavy casualties are being sustained.

Dracul oversees the effort as a party of horsemen approach led by HUNYADI, KING OF TRANSILVANIA.

DRACUL

Hunyadi, what news from the North?

Hunyadi dismounts, his mood solemn. He too wears a dragon pendant.

HUNYADI

Grave news brothers. Sigismund is dead, Hungary will not fight. Poland has withdrawn too.

The grim reality of this ripples through the crowd.

DRACUL

How many men have you brought?

HUNYADI

None. Without the might of our Northern neighbors we stand no chance against the Ottoman.

BOGDAN

You worthless coward bastard! You assembled this coalition.

HUNYADI

Which is why I am here, but defeat is inevitable. We must surrender today so we may be strong enough to strike tomorrow.

DRACUL

This is my country!

Dracul grabs Hunyadi, ready to throttle him. Bogdan separates them.

DRACUL (CONT'D)

Damn you to hell, Hunyadi. Leave now if you did not come to fight. You are no longer welcome here.

HUNYADI

You will always be welcome with me, if you need a place to retreat.

Hunyadi departs, leaving the two kings fuming. Dracul stares out at the colossal army they face, resigned to what must be done. He calls over his General and chief advisor, CAZAN.

DRACUL

Cazan. Raise the white flag.

BOGDAN

You're surrendering?

DRACUL

What choice do I have? We are beaten, I will not slaughter these men to prove it.

Cazan nods his approval and moves off leaving Dracul to mull the enormity of this decision.

DRACUL (CONT'D)

Stay here until after I have negotiated with the Sultan. If I am killed or taken prisoner, Francesca and the boys should go back to Moldavia with you.

Suddenly the cannon fire stops, followed by a roar of celebration from the Ottoman. The white flag has been raised.

VOICE O.S.

You cannot defeat me!

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad taunts his two SPARRING PARTNERS in a makeshift training ring. Radu and Stephen watch as he gives an impressive display of thrusts and parries. A magnificent GOTHIC CASTLE looms over the small township.

Suddenly all attention is drawn to a party of horsemen who thunder past, riding towards the castle. Bogdan leads them.

STEPHEN  
It's my father.

Instantly the boys are sprinting in the horseman's wake.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE - DAY

Vlad bursts in to find his mother FRANCESCA, wailing into Bogdan's chest. Cazan stands nearby.

VLAD  
What happened? Has father been  
killed?

Francesca crosses to Vlad, embracing him tightly.

FRANCESCA  
Your father is fine.

VLAD  
Where is he?

BOGDAN  
Waiting for you.

FRANCESCA  
He's not taking them!

Stephen and Radu rush in, startled by Francesca's outburst.

VLAD  
What happened Cazan?

CAZAN  
We were forced to surrender, a  
treaty was negotiated. As security,  
the Sultan wishes to take you and  
Radu back to Adrianople with him.

VLAD  
We are to be Ottoman prisoners?

FRANCESCA  
No!

Radu is bewildered as Francesca smothers him in her embrace,  
but Vlad knows that her protests cannot prevent this.

VLAD  
When do we leave?



EXT. WALLACHIAN SHIP, DANUBE - DAY

Vlad stands on the bow of the ship watching Bulgaria approach, the Ottoman navy moored to its bank. He takes several deep breaths, steadying his nerves.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE, BULGARIA - DAY

Dracul watches the ship's approach from the edge of the Ottoman camp. SULTAN MURAD appears at his shoulder, an older man with clever eyes and an easy air of power.

MURAD

Have your time with them, then  
bring them to me.

DRACUL

You talk much of your honor, I am  
trusting my children's lives on it.

MURAD

As long as our friendship lives, so  
shall they.

Dracul mounts his horse, riding down to the Danube.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, BULGARIA - DAY

Dracul embraces his sons at the bank of the river. Vlad is acutely aware of the Ottoman soldiers milling around.

DRACUL

I am sorry to have to ask for your  
help so soon.

VLAD

How long are we to be prisoners?

DRACUL

Watch your tone with me.

Dracul leaves Radu with Cazan as he talks to Vlad privately.

DRACUL (CONT'D)

Life is hard Vlad, how you deal  
with adversity determines what kind  
of man you are. As kings we must be  
great men. This is your first duty  
as prince of Wallachia, I want you  
to put it to good use.

VLAD  
How can I be of any use here?

DRACUL  
(Covertly)  
To know your enemy is the greatest  
weapon a king can have.

Vlad visibly inflates, suddenly feeling empowered. Though the words are hollow in Dracul's mouth and now haste advances with the Sultan's approach.

DRACUL (CONT'D)  
I will not rest until you are home,  
you have my word. Until then, keep  
close watch on Radu. He is young  
and does not yet understand the  
world.

VLAD  
I will look after him.

Dracul takes off his CRUCIFIX and fastens it around Vlad's neck, embracing him tightly.

DRACUL  
Remember who you are Vlad, there  
will be pressure to forget.

Vlad nods, holding back tears as they rejoin Radu and Cazan. When the Sultan arrives, everyone in the vicinity bows. Including Dracul.

Vlad is devastated to see his father so emasculated. When Dracul raises his head, Vlad cannot meet his eye.

INT. SULTAN'S CARRIAGE, BULGARIA - DAY

Vlad stares out of the window, Radu asleep on his shoulder. Murad lowers the document he reads to study them.

MURAD  
I think you will like Adrianople. I  
have a son exactly your age, I hope  
the two of you will become friends.

Vlad ignores him, keeping his attention routed to the window.

INT. SULTAN'S CARRIAGE, CITY OF ADRIANOPLE - NIGHT

The Sultan's carriage weaves through the streets of Adrianople, entering the Palace. Vlad and Radu are riveted, never before have they seen such grandeur.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - NIGHT

Murad strides into a large drawing room where his WIFE and TWO CHILDREN stand waiting.

MURAD

Welcome our two latest wards,  
Princes Vlad and Radu of Wallachia.  
This is my wife Mara and my  
children, Mohammed and Sofia.

Mohammed has the deposition of a child who knows he is on the side with all of the power. He regards the prince's rustic clothing with amusement.

MOHAMMED

Welcome to Adrianople. I am sure it  
is very different from what you are  
used to.

VLAD

Very different.

Vlad's animosity is palpable, equally disdainful of Mohammed's fine silk wear. Murad diffuses.

MURAD

You can learn much from one  
another. Get some rest tonight,  
tomorrow you begin your studies.

Murad signals to a GUARD.

MURAD (CONT'D)

Show them to their quarters.

The Guard BOWS and strides away, the Princes turn to follow.

MURAD (CONT'D)

In our culture it is customary to  
bow to your Sultan when you enter  
and leave his presence.

Radu bows but Vlad does not.

VLAD

In our culture a king bows only to  
God.

They run after the guard leaving Mohammed furious by the  
insubordination. Murad smiles, he quite enjoyed the moxie.

MURAD

He will come around.

INT. PRINCE'S CHAMBERS, PALACE, ADRIANOPOLE - NIGHT

The door locks behind the Princes and they quietly take in  
their new surroundings. A simple room with a small window and  
two beds.

VLAD

You can choose cots.

RADU

Can I sleep with you?

VLAD

Just for tonight.

Radu climbs onto one of the cots. Vlad sits down by his side.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Don't bow to the Sultan again. We  
are political prisoners, not his  
subjects.

RADU

Father did.

VLAD

Just do as I say, Radu.

Radu nods, closing his eyes but Vlad will not sleep tonight.

INT. CLASSROOM, PALACE, ADRIANOPOLE - DAY

A worn Bulgarian knight stands at the front of the class,  
this is LEVENT. The wall behind him is covered by  
ILLUSTRATIONS OF FORTIFICATIONS. Vlad and Radu sit together  
on one side of the room, Mohammed and his friends on the  
other.

Levent points to a fortification next to a river.

LEVENT

Semna in Egypt, army estimated at twenty thousand. Who wants to start?

Mohammed nods, this is clearly his favorite subject.

MOHAMMED

I would use my cannons to collapse the front and rear walls and then rush them from both sides. With the bigger army, I would crush them in a day.

LEVENT

Aggressive but is it efficient?

MOHAMMED

Conquering a fortress in one day is fairly efficient.

Mohammed's entourage laugh.

VLAD

If you don't care about the lives of your soldiers.

Levent smiles, a lifelong soldier.

LEVENT

Elaborate.

VLAD

In siege, those inside the building always have the advantage. When fighting twenty, you could lose thirty.

LEVENT

What would you do?

VLAD

It's the desert so they cannot dig wells, that's why the fortress is so close to the river. I would cut off their water supply, draw them out into the open and take away their advantage.

MOHAMMED

That would take months.

VLAD

It takes years to raise soldiers.  
Plus this way you don't destroy the  
building you are trying to acquire.

The class laugh, Mohammed does not.

LEVENT

Good work, Vlad.

Murad clears his throat, announcing his presence. All stand and bow except Vlad and Radu. The Sultan regards them evenly, noting Radu's increased insubordination.

MURAD

You have a good mind for strategy  
Vlad, now we must work on your  
manners. Carry on Levent.

Murad departs leaving Mohammed reeling in the humiliation of being bested by Vlad in front of his father.

EXT. PALACE GARDENS, ADRIANOPOLE - DAY

The class is on recess. Vlad has fallen asleep under the shade of a tree, Radu sits by his side watching the other boys play with a wooden ball. One of them notices and waves him over.

OLDER BOY

You come from Wallachia? What do  
you do for fun up there?

RADU

Ride horses, hunt eagles.

The boys laugh at the provincial Prince's idea of fun.

OLDER BOY

Medeniyete hosgeldiniz! Do you  
speak any Turkish?

(Radu shakes his head)

That means welcome to civilization.

More laughter. Vlad wakes, looking over to the boys.

OLDER BOY (CONT'D)

(Noticing Radu's crucifix)

I see you know Jesus, do you know  
Mohammed?

Radu nods, pointing to Mohammed. Raucous laughter. Vlad is getting annoyed and moves into earshot.

OLDER BOY (CONT'D)

I meant the prophet Mohammed.

Mohammed notices Vlad now listening and stands, assuming the role of tutor.

MOHAMMED

There were twenty-five prophets,  
Radu. Adam, Noah, Moses, Solomon,  
Jesus. You have heard of these men?

(Radu nods)

The final prophet was a man called  
Mohammed. He spoke directly to  
Allah, to God. Then he wrote a book  
called the Koran about the things  
Allah told him.

Vlad storms over to Radu, pulling him away from the group.

VLAD

Enough of your rubbish, you don't  
talk to my brother.

MOHAMMED

You are an Ottoman subject now  
Vlad, you must learn our ways.

Vlad continues to walk away, Mohammed determined to bait him.

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)

You will soon realize you are not  
my equal. My father is a legend,  
yours is an ordinary coward.

In a heart beat Vlad is upon him, lashing out with a torrent  
of blows. The fight is going one way fast, then Mohammed  
pulls out a pocket knife and things even up.

VLAD

You talk of cowardice then pull a  
knife on an unarmed man?

Mohammed is clearly scared and lashes out, missing. On the  
second swing he slices Vlad's shoulder. Vlad replies with a  
thunderous knee to Mohammed's thigh, sending him to the  
ground. The knife clatters away, Vlad scooping it up.

VLAD (CONT'D)

You know what we did in Wallachia?  
Learnt how to fight.

RADU

Don't Vlad.

Too late, SLASH. Vlad brings the knife down across Mohammed's face, sending the young Sultan to his knees. Everyone is shocked silent. Vlad drops the knife as guards rush in.

EXT. TRAINING YARD, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

Vlad tries to contain his trembling as he awaits punishment. A crowd has gathered to watch the spectacle. Murad steps forward, slapping Vlad to his knees.

MURAD

Obviously I have been too lenient with you, but you will learn. You are nothing unless I grant it, not a prince, not a king. First you must be my subject. Bow to me.

Vlad gets to his feet but instead of bowing he stands tall. Murad slaps him back to his knees.

MURAD (CONT'D)

Stand up and bow to me.

Again Vlad stands and again he does not bow.

VLAD

I bow only to God.

MURAD

And now to your Sultan, as do all of my other subjects.

VLAD

I am not your subject.

Murad strikes Vlad twice more, sending him back to the ground. His nose and mouth are bloody.

MURAD

Fortunately for the future of your country, your brother appears to be more malleable.

Vlad leaps forward, straining against his binds.

VLAD

Stay away from my brother.

Murad smiles, nodding to his general.

MURAD

Give him ten lashes.



A NEANDERTHAL GUARD eagerly steps forward but Levent intercepts him, taking the whip. Vlad locks eyes with the Sultan. Then they come ONE, TWO, THREE...

Vlad cries out at each strike but quickly regains his composure, returning his gaze to the Sultan.

MURAD (CONT'D)  
You will learn.

INT. PRINCES CELL, PALACE, ADRIANOPOLE - DAY

Levent accompanies Vlad back to his cell, his bloodied back covered by wet silk. As they approach, Radu is led out of their cell by a NURSE and TWO GUARDS.

VLAD  
Where are you taking him?

LEVENT  
The Sultan has ordered for you to be separated.

Vlad tries to approach his brother, Levent restrains him.

LEVENT (CONT'D)  
You are allowed no further contact until the Sultan declares it.

Radu is upset seeing his brother's condition.

RADU  
What happened to your back?

VLAD  
Radu listen to me, you must remember who you are. You are a Christian and prince of Wallachia, ignore their blasphemy and lies.

The guards hustle Radu away, Vlad calling after him.

VLAD (CONT'D)  
We are not Ottoman subjects Radu, remember that. Father will have us home before winter.

Levent pushes Vlad into his cell.

LEVENT  
If you keep this up you will be dead before winter.

VLAD

Go to hell.

LEVENT

I am trying to help you, Vlad.

VLAD

By lashing me?

LEVENT

Better I than he who wanted to. I understand your anger but you are here now. Your only focus should be getting out alive.

Vlad nods and Levent takes his leave. Alone in his cell, Vlad peels the silk from his back revealing deep lacerations. Then he hangs his Crucifix from the wall and dropping to his knees before Christ Almighty, Vlad bows his head in prayer.

VLAD

Oh Mighty God, give me the strength to live on in the glory of Thy name. Let there be known amongst our enemies vengeance for the blood of Thy servants which has been shed. And guide my passage home through this valley of darkness, so that I may reunite with my family and fulfill my duty to Thee. Amen.

As we circle back around Vlad we see that it is TEN YEARS LATER. He is now a YOUNG MAN, intense in his prayer. The muscles on his back ripple under a patchwork of scars.

EXT. COMBAT TRAINING FACILITY, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

AND SWORDS CLASH. Vlad is locked in combat with Levent, both fight for their lives. Then CLANK, Levent disarms Vlad.

LEVENT

When you're big enough, I'll be too old.

VLAD

You learn that line in the whore house?

Levent grins and they cross to their canteens to drink.

VLAD (CONT'D)

What new whispers from Europe?

LEVENT

I meant what I said, I am not  
telling you any more news.

Vlad drinks, never taking his eyes off Levent.

VLAD

You know something good, don't you?  
Come on Levent, don't be an arse. I  
have nothing without you.

LEVENT

Then you should learn to tow the  
line.

Levent holds out for a moment longer before relenting.

LEVENT (CONT'D)

King Ladislas of Poland joined the  
Dragon Order.

VLAD

How old is he?

LEVENT

Eighteen.

VLAD

Little bastard. He won't change  
anything, none of them ever do

Vlad's familiar anxiety is beginning to swell. He looks over  
the HALF DOZEN GUARDS, now a constant presence around him.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I have to get out of here.

LEVENT

This is why I should not tell you  
these things. You will get out of  
here when the Sultan releases you.

VLAD

When will that be?

LEVENT

When the Sultan releases you.

Vlad looks back over to the guards, the high walls.

LEVENT (CONT'D)

You know Vlad, you would do well to  
copy your brother Radu's example.

As intended, this gets a rise out of Vlad.

VLAD  
I'm going to kill you old man.

And they are fighting again.

INT. PALACE ARENA, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

The elite of Adrianople have gathered with the Sultan to watch the young men of the court play a game of POLO. Radu has grown into a handsome young man, now the center of attention as he gallops down the field with the ball.

A final strike and Radu scores a point as the finishing bell rings. The crowd erupt with applause, none more excitedly than Sofia. Mohammed rides to Radu, joining the celebration.

MOHAMMED  
Always the showman.

RADU  
Just giving the crowd what they want.

The boys dismount, both BOWING to the Sultan before heading towards the stables. There is an easy air of friendship about them, their conversation covert and excited.

MOHAMMED  
We are all set for tonight. After dinner we meet in my chambers for an evening of games, women and wine for the heathens.

RADU  
I'll drink it all. Is your sister coming?

MOHAMMED  
She asked the same thing about you.

Radu looks over to Sofia, faltering when he sees she is watching him. He gives her a little wave.

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)  
You're pathetic.

The boys continue on their way, laughing as they go.

INT. VLAD'S CELL, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

It is early morning but Vlad is already doing vigorous pushups on the floor of his cell. Then the faint notes of a woman's laughter break his rhythm.

Vlad crosses to the window, looking down to the gardens below where he sees RADU EMBRACED WITH SOFIA. They kiss before quickly departing in separate directions.

Vlad dons a shirt and retrieves a gold coin from beneath his mattress before knocking hard on his cell door.

VLAD

I wish to see my brother.

GUARD

You have to get permission.

VLAD

(Tossing him the coin)

Now.

INT. RADU'S CHAMBER, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

Radu washes his face and changes his clothing. A rap on the door and Vlad barges in, turning to the guard...

VLAD

I wish to see him in private.

And he slams the door in the guard's face. Radu is amused, in terrific spirits.

RADU

Good morning brother.

VLAD

Did you sleep well last night?

Radu smiles, realizing he's caught.

RADU

How did you know?

VLAD

I saw you in the garden this morning, the whole palace probably saw you. Have you lost your mind?

RADU

It's just harmless fun.

VLAD

You have to be smarter than this.  
What if the Sultan catches you?  
There will be hell to pay.

RADU

Okay, you've made your point, Vlad.  
You should go back to your room  
before you get into trouble.

But Vlad cannot drop it.

VLAD

She is an Ottoman Princess, you  
cannot court her. God knows how  
many rules you are breaking.

RADU

Since when have you been a paragon  
of good behavior?

VLAD

I'm serious, Radu. You cannot court  
her.

Radu sees the concern on his brother's face, placates.

RADU

Okay, I will put an end to it.

Then Mohammed barrels in, no love lost between he and Vlad.

MOHAMMED

Something big is happening, my  
father called an emergency meeting  
with his generals.

The three men walk out into the corridor to see Levent and  
several guards approach. The mood is suddenly very tense.

VLAD

What?

LEVENT

I have been instructed to escort  
you and Radu to the prison.

VLAD

What? What the hell is going on?

Levent is loath to deliver the news.

LEVENT

Europe has declared crusade.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, WALLACHIA - DAY

Dracul and Cazan ride hard. As they reach high ground Dracul reins his horse to an abrupt stop, staggered by what he sees below. EIGHTY THOUSAND CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS litter the bank of the Danube.

INT. WAR TENT, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY

Dracul bursts into the tent to find Hunyadi holding court. LADISLAS, BOY KING OF POLAND AND HUNGARY stands by his side, resplendent in his SOLID GOLD BREASTPLATE. Scores of ADVISORS bustle around.

DRACUL

You deceitful, conniving, slag. How dare you launch an offensive from my country without consulting me?

HUNYADI

What would have been the point? You would not have supported us and we would not have stopped.

DRACUL

Because this is madness. The Sultan has made no advances in Europe. Why provoke him?

HUNYADI

The Sultan's wars in Asia Minor have distracted him. As they draw to a close he is sure to turn his attention back to Europe.

LADISLAS

I am giving you back your country.

DRACUL

And murdering my sons!

Ambassador of Rome, CARDINAL CESARININ stands.

CESARININ

A parent losing a child is the greatest tragedy man endures, you will not be alone in your despair. But it is imperative we fight, for the freedom of Europe and for the Gospel of Christ.

HUNYADI

I am sorry for you loss Dracul, but we are strong and God wills it. We Crusade.

EXT. WAR TENT, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY

Dracul storms from the tent, joining Cazan.

DRACUL

There is no stopping this.

CAZAN

Many of our men from the southern regions have come to join the fight. What are your orders?

DRACUL

Let them do as they like, they will anyway. Nothing we can do will save the princes now. Keep me informed.

INT. CELL, PRISON, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

Vlad and Radu sit in a cramped cell. A key jams into the lock making them both jump and the door opens to reveal Sofia. Radu leaps to embrace her.

SOFIA

I had to see you, I cannot bear this. How are you?

RADU

We're fine. What is going on?

SOFIA

Mohammed has gone with father to fight the Christian armies.

VLAD

You have to get us out of here.

SOFIA

It took every favor I had just to get in here for a second.

VLAD

Our lives depend on it.

SOFIA

I spoke with Mohammed, he swore he would let no harm come to you.



VLAD

This is bigger than childish friendships! The Christian army could only have invaded from Wallachia, our function here was to safeguard against that. Your father has to kill us now, do you understand that Sofia?

RADU

Enough, Vlad.

The guard enters, annoyed by the commotion.

SOFIA

I swear I will let nothing happen to you.

The guard waves her out and closes the door behind them.

VLAD

You need to wake up and realize the situation we are in.

RADU

Your behavior for the last ten years has not exactly left us in good stead.

Stale mate. They return to sitting in silence.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE, BULGARIA - DAY

Mohammed stands with the Sultan atop a high vantage point. In the far distance they can see the Christian army on the bank of the Danube.

Below them stands the CITY OF VARNA and behind it the massive Ottoman army. Murad looks at the sun gauging the time.

MURAD

What would you suggest we do?

MOHAMMED

March until nightfall. We can meet them by first light tomorrow.

Murad appraises his son with mild contempt.

MURAD

If you spent less time gambling and  
fucking, you might make a better  
Sultan. We let our men rest, make  
the Crusaders come to us.

Murad leaves his son reeling as the sun sinks rapid time and  
a trillion stars explode out of the night.

EXT. BATTLE FIELD, BULGARIA - DAY

As the sun rises over the mountains to the east, the land  
begins to shake with a tremendous rumble. Murad watches from  
above as the two great armies race towards each other.

They meet with a sickening crash of metal against metal. The  
fighting is fast and brutal.

INT. WAR ROOM, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Dracul sits with his council, silent, waiting. Then Cazan  
rushes in.

CAZAN

It was a disaster, they annihilated  
us.

EXT. CITY OF VARNA, BULGARIA - FLASHBACK

The Christian armies have liberated Varna but an onslaught of  
Ottoman troops prevent them from securing the city walls.  
King Ladislas falls, his horse pierced in the chest.

CAZAN V.O.

On the second day, Ladislas fell.  
By then half the Christian army was  
dead.

EXT. BATTLE FIELD, BULGARIA - FLASHBACK

The Christian army is now outnumbered as the Ottoman continue  
to rush them from every angle. Hunyadi catches his breath,  
surveying the massacre with horror.

CAZAN V.O.

The Ottoman were bigger and more  
organized. We surrendered at dusk.

Hunyadi signals and the WHITE FLAG is raised.

EXT. SMALL SAIL BOAT, DANUBE - FLASHBACK

Hunyadi sails to safety, his stare never wavering from the orange glow of campfire on the Bulgarian bank.

CAZAN V.O.

Hunyadi fled. Bogdan awaits audience with the Sultan. His army sustained massive casualties.

INT. SULTAN'S WAR TENT, BULGARIA - DAY

Bogdan stands in attendance as the Sultan is presented with the flags of the surrendered Christian armies. Hungary, Poland, Transilvania, Moldavia and WALLACHIA.

CAZAN V.O.

As did all of the armies, including our own. Preliminary reports indicate around three thousand Wallachians dead.

Levent watches the Sultan brood darkly, pondering the Wallachian Flag.

INT. WAR ROOM, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Dracul broods darkly, pondering his next move.

CAZAN

What would you have me do?

The air is thick as Dracul weighs his options. Then resolve.

DRACUL

Send a messenger to the Sultan. Tell him that in return for the lives of my children, I will bring him the head of Hunyadi.

The council gasp, shocked. WLADISLAV stands, distant heir to the throne and petulant because of his lack of power.

WLADISLAV

You have ruined us with your Ottoman treaty, now you wish to incite civil war in Europe? I will not support it.

Many of the council rap on the table, supporting Wladislav.

DRACUL

Hunyadi engineered a disaster for Europe, they will not intervene. He claims he is willing to give his life for this cause, then I will gladly trade it for my children's.

WLADISLAV

If you are worried about an heir you should legitimize your bastard son in the monastery.

This sucks the air out of the room.

DRACUL

If you value your life, you should watch how you address your king.  
(Turning to Cazan)  
Go now, before it is too late.

Cazan departs, leaving the council furiously whispering. Wladislav's mind rushes a mile a minute, eyes shining with foul ambition.

INT. CELL, PRISON, ADRIANOPOLE - DAY

Radu is sleeping as the door opens and TWO GUARDS enter. Vlad bolts to his feet, standing protectively over his brother.

GUARD

Out, both of you.

VLAD

Where are you taking us?

GUARD

(Nasty smile.)  
You'll see.

INT. DUNGEON, PRISON, ADRIANOPOLE - DAY

Vlad and Radu are led down to the DUNGEON where a HOODED AXEMAN awaits them. Vlad immediately starts to fight, elbowing a guard in the jaw. The second guard knocks him to the ground with a club and starts viciously kicking him.

Radu tries to pull him off as an AXE slams into the first guard's back. In the moment of shock, the Axeman thrusts a short blade into the second guard's throat. His hood falls away revealing LEVENT.

LEVENT  
I'm taking you back to Wallachia.

RADU  
You terrified us Levent.

Levent hurries over to the door, bolting it shut.

LEVENT  
The Sultan destroyed the Crusaders,  
Wallachia fought. Your lives are in  
grave danger.

Levent searches the guards, finding the keys to unlock the  
prince's chains.

LEVENT (CONT'D)  
I have horses, we must get to the  
mountains by tonight.

Levent rushes to the far end of the Dungeon where a stair  
case leads to a trapdoor. Vlad follows, Radu does not move.

VLAD  
What are you doing? Let's go.

RADU  
I'm not coming.

VLAD  
What are you taking about? The  
Sultan is going to kill us.

RADU  
I don't believe that.

Vlad is floored, tries to remain calm.

VLAD  
This is our chance to get out of  
here Radu. Go home and be free men.

RADU  
This is my home, Vlad. You hate it  
here and you should go. But I am  
staying.

VLAD  
Because of her? We have a chance to  
be with our family.

RADU

I barely remember them. All I know is that they left us here for ten years without even a single letter, then participated in this Crusade.

Vlad slaps his brother.

VLAD

Our parents always loved us, the rest is politics.

Guards arrive at the locked door and start pounding on the wood.

LEVENT

We have to go, now.

VLAD

Please come with us Radu. We will help father rule our country.

Radu embraces his brother tightly, kissing his cheek.

RADU

I can help you more from here. God speed, brother. We will reunite in less turbulent times.

The door starts to splinter under the persuasion of an axe. Vlad is desperate not to leave his brother but eventually Levent pulls him away.

EXT. MOUNTAINS, BULGARIA - DAY

On top of the world, you can see a hundred miles in every direction. Vlad and Levent are two specs on a seldom used mountain pass.

EXT. MOUNTAINS, BULGARIA - DAY

As Vlad and Levent make their decent from the mountains they see the aftermath of the Crusade. The ground is red with blood and thousands of fresh graves line Varna's walls. Ladislav has been IMPALED, a warning to future Crusaders.

INT. MANNER HOUSE, TRANSILVANIA - NIGHT

Wladislav waits in an OPULENT DRAWING ROOM. Hunyadi enters, intrigued by this unexpected visit.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, BULGARIA - NIGHT

Under the cover of night, Vlad and Levent steal a KAYAK from a fisherman's shack. They paddle out onto the Danube.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DAWN

As dawn breaks they reach the bank of Wallachia. Once on Wallachian soil Vlad drops to knee's, running his fingers through the grass, smelling the earth. Home.

EXT. CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

The castle is under attack. Unprepared ROYAL GUARDS attempt to prevent Wladislav and his men from entering the castle. The Royal Guards are outnumbered and losing men fast.

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE - DAY

The fighting has spilled into the castle. Dracul rushes to Cazan, handing him a cloth bundle.

DRACUL

Take these and leave while you  
still can. That's an order, Cazan.

Cazan embraces his old friend and reluctantly slips out.

EXT. PORT OF TURNU, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad and Levent enter the PORT OF TURNU where ragged Wallachians que to sell their wares to RICH FOREIGN MERCHANTS. Vlad is shocked to see his people so impoverished.

VLAD

I had no idea it would be so bad.

LEVENT

The Sultan demands high tribute.  
Taxes must be raised, trade slows  
and the economy falls. It makes it  
impossible to become strong enough  
to challenge him. Come on, we  
should keep moving.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

Dracul tries to comfort Francesca as the door to their chamber bursts open and Wladislav enters with his men. Dracul draws his sword but surrounded by men he is soon restrained.

Wladislav takes Francesca by the hair, pulling her close.

WLADISLAV

Your time as king has come to an end, Dracul. Hunyadi sends his regards.

And he slits Francesca's throat. Dracul jumps to prevent it but a club from behind knocks him unconscious.

EXT. TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad and Levent ride into the township of Tirgoviste. The exhaustion from several days of travel cannot dull Vlad's excitement to be home.

As they enter the town's square, the castle comes into view creating an ominous air. The front gate is locked and heavily guarded, the flag flies HALF MAST. Levent leads them to a TAVERN where two men stand drinking at the door.

LEVENT

Morning brothers. Tell me, why does the flag fly half mast?

DRUNK

The king has been slain. Replaced by another useless bastard.

In seconds, Vlad is off his horse and has the man pinned to the wall of the TAVERN

VLAD

What do you mean slain?

Levent jumps from his horse, pulling Vlad from the Drunk.

DRUNK

What do you think I mean? Slain, dead. Buried with the queen on the hill yonder.

Vlad absorbs this, staring up at the surrounding hills. Disbelief, fear, then panic setting in.



VLAD

Oh my God, no.

Levent sees that the castle guards are paying close attention to Vlad. Suddenly they begin to galvanize.

LEVENT

We're leaving.

Vlad draws his sword, his attention locked on the castle.

LEVENT (CONT'D)

Vlad, you will have your revenge,  
but not today. Get on your horse,  
now!

Reluctantly Vlad complies and they gallop from the township.

EXT. BANK OF THE RIVER OLT, WALLACHIA - DUSK

A FISHERMAN stands with two exhausted horses watching Vlad and Levent load his small boat onto the river. Suddenly TEN HORSEMAN appear, galloping in their direction.

Vlad jumps into the boat. Levent pushes it further out before turning back to shore. The horsemen are now FIVE HUNDRED FEET AWAY.

VLAD

We can both make it.

LEVENT

They will reach us.

VLAD

Then we will both fight.

THREE HUNDRED FEET.

LEVENT

There are too many. I am an old man  
Vlad, you have your whole life  
ahead of you. Your people need you  
now. Be strong my son.

THE HORSEMEN DISMOUNT, splashing into the river. With a tremendous thrust Levent pushes the boat further out before turning to the horseman to unleash hell. He is savage, a thousand men could not reach that boat. But eventually he falls and as Vlad cries out in anguish, we SMASH TO BLACK.

EXT. RIVER OLT, WALLACHIA - DUSK

LIGHTNING CRACKS and torrential rain pours down. Vlad paddles to the bank of the river, his pursuers long behind now. Once on land he pushes the boat back onto the river, the current pulls it away as he runs to the trees for cover.

EXT. GROVE OF TREES, RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Vlad has put together a makeshift shelter but rain continues to pour down and he is soaking wet. He takes out his father's Crucifix, the only thing he has left and for the first time since he was a child, Vlad cries.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE, WALLACHIA - DAY

An apple bounces off of the front door of a small country house. Cazan comes out to find his garden empty, suspicious. Then Vlad steps from behind the garden wall.

CAZAN

My God, even the darkest cloud has a silver lining. How did you get here?

VLAD

It's a long story.

Cazan embraces Vlad like a son before ushering him into the house. A SCARECROW keeps watch in the garden.

INT. KITCHEN, CAZAN'S MANNER, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad is washed and dressed in clean clothing. Cazan refills their glasses with PALINCA, strong pear brandy.

CAZAN

After the crusade, your father made a move to save your life, Wladislav countered. His timing was perfect. But he could not have done this alone. My guess, he was backed by Hunyadi who's life your father intended to trade for your own.

Vlad takes all of this in.

VLAD

Did he talk about us? Radu and I?

CAZAN

Everyday. He was never the same after you left. Everyone blames him for the treaty but he suffered more than anyone.

Cazan stands and retrieves a cloth bundle from behind the chimney. He hands it to Vlad.

CAZAN (CONT'D)

These belong to you now. Your father entrusted me with them as the castle fell.

Vlad unwraps the bundle, revealing the Dragon Order Pendant and the TOLEDO BLADE.

CAZAN (CONT'D)

Sword of Wallachia, official symbol of Wallachian rule.

Vlad fastens the pendant around his neck, regarding the sword with reverence. A fire building within.

VLAD

I swear, I will not rest until I have avenged these crimes and killed Wladislav and Hunyadi in person. And then when I am king, we will put this country back on her feet.

CAZAN

I will do all that I can to help.

Vlad nods his appreciation

VLAD

But first, we give my parents a proper Christian burial.

Off Cazan's look of askew...

EXT. HILLS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad drips with sweat, digging up his parents fresh grave. Two feet down he hits wood and Cazan's men help him heave the box from the hole. Upon examination they see the lid has been nailed shut.

Cazan cannot bear to look as they pry the lid open with their swords.

Vlad illuminates the contents with his torch, reeling back from the sight within. The lid is a patchwork of claw marks. His mother's throat slit, his father was BURIED ALIVE.

Vlad controls his pain and rage, focusing on the castle as Cazan's men load the bodies onto their horses.

EXT. HILLS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE - LATER

Vlad stands at the mouth of the grave, Cazan's scarecrow stuck in the ground next to him. He lights the tip of an arrow from a burning torch and fires towards the castle.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - CONTINUOUS

The arrow clatters across the chamber floor, startling Wladislav and his wife awake.

WLADISLAV

Guards!

Guards rush in, heading out to the balcony to investigate. All they can see is a BURNING SCARECROW on the hill above, the flames dancing in the night.

EXT. HILLS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE - DAWN

At dawn, Wladislav and his guards inspect the empty grave. The burnt remains of the scarecrow flap in the wind. Wladislav looks to his captain, disconcerted.

EXT. COUNTRY CHAPEL, WALLACHIA - DAWN

A nervous priest finishes giving the last rights over the fresh graves of Dracul and Francesca. Vlad crosses himself.

CAZAN

We should go.

EXT. CAZAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Wladislav and his men storm the courtyard of Cazan's property searching the house and stables. Cazan regards Wladislav with calm contempt. Vlad is long gone.

EXT. CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, WALLACHIA - DAY

Once again Vlad is on top of the world, making his way on foot across the CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS towards MOLDAVIA.

INT. MURAD'S STUDY, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

Radu is shown into the Sultan's opulent study where Murad greets him with a warm embrace.

MURAD

Thank you for coming. I wanted to offer you my deepest condolences.

MOHAMMED

I am sorry for your loss, Radu.

RADU

I barely knew them. What I lost was the chance to.

MURAD

You will always have a family here with us.

Radu nods his appreciation and the three men sit.

MURAD (CONT'D)

I must apologize for your brief imprisonment and I thank you for your loyalty. Know that you were never in danger.

RADU

I hope you see now that any future imprisonment would be unnecessary.

MURAD

Your loyalty is unquestionable. That is why I would like to offer you the throne of Wallachia.

Radu is shocked.

MURAD (CONT'D)

King Wladislav has declared independence from my empire. You will replace him, ruling under the treaty negotiated by your father.

RADU

Vlad has claim before I.

MURAD

Vlad is gone. Besides, I doubt I could trust him to honor our terms.

MOHAMMED

You will be the better king, Radu.

MURAD

Take some time to think about it.  
As king of Wallachia, you would be  
eligible to marry my daughter.

Radu flushes under the wry stare of Murad.

RADU

I thank you for the offer Sultan,  
but I cannot do anything until Vlad  
returns.

The Sultan nods as Radu bows and takes his leave. Alone with  
his son, Murad's friendly disposition evaporates.

MURAD

Vlad will try to take power  
independently. Write to Bogdan in  
Moldavia, warn him that any  
assistance he gives Vlad will be  
seen as a breach of our treaty.

MOHAMMED

If he does take power, I will  
happily deal with it for you. I  
will teach the arrogant shit a  
lesson we will not soon forget.

MURAD

Like you did the last time you  
fought? To conquer Hungary, we must  
move through Wallachia quietly.  
Make sure Radu accepts my offer.

Mohammed nods, chagrined as Murad falls into a fit of  
rasping coughs.

EXT. CITY OF SUCEAVA, MOLDAVIA - DAY

SUCEAVA is alive with activity, capital city of MOLDAVIA.  
Vlad approaches the castle, a shiver running down his spine  
as he sees that this flag too flies at HALF MAST. The castle  
guards approach him, the CAPTAIN taking the lead.

CAPTAIN

Can I help you?

VLAD

I was curious why the flag flies  
half mast.

CAPTAIN

King Bogdan is dead Sir. What is your business here?

Vlad is shocked, trying to cover.

VLAD

I'm a farmer, traveling back from the war. I just wanted to see the castle and pay my respects.

With a nod, Vlad turns his horse and trots away. The Captain's keen eyes search his every detail as he goes.

INT. TAVERN, SUCEAVA, MOLDAVIA - DAY

Vlad sits in the corner of a Tavern, eating. When he sees the Captain enter, he reaches for his sword.

CAPTAIN

No need for the blade brother, I am just here to talk. How's your food?

VLAD

The beef's dry and the bread's stale, the Palinca's good though. What do you want?

CAPTAIN

I know you are no farmer.

The captain reaches across to Vlad, parting his cloak to reveal a glimpse of his dragon pendant. Vlad reaches under the table, pushing the tip of his sword into the Captain's abdomen.

VLAD

You better make your point.

CAPTAIN

The king has been slain, murdered by his brother. I remain loyal to the true heir, your cousin Prince Stephen.

VLAD

How did you know who I was?

CAPTAIN

I caught a glimpse of your dragon pendant. Stephen hides in the forest, I can take you to him.

Vlad sits back, appraising this man and his offer.

VLAD

How long have you been in his service?

CAPTAIN

I trained him as a child.

VLAD

What did he tell you about me?

CAPTAIN

He said you had a terrible temper and you were a massive show off.

Vlad half smiles, slightly closer to trusting this man.

EXT. FORREST, MOLDAVIA - DUSK

The dense pines sway and creek in the wind. Vlad walks ten paces behind Stephen's man, sword draw. Ahead of them a small clearing comes into view. Semicircular in shape, walled off across the center by a rock face.

CAPTAIN

This is it. We must present ourselves in the clearing.

VLAD

If this is a trap, I'm going to kill you first.

Vlad motions for the Captain to lead the way and cautiously they step into the clearing. Ten steps in an arrow slams into the ground at Vlad's feet. He whirls on the Captain.

CAPTAIN

Look.

Stephen appears at the top of the rock face, SIX LOYAL GUARDS with him.

STEPHEN

It's been a long time little cousin.

EXT. CAVE, FORREST, MOLDAVIA - NIGHT

Vlad and Stephen sit by a fire sharing a ROAST HARE and a JUG OF PALINCA. Stephen too wears his father's Dragon pendant.



STEPHEN

My uncle had always wanted the throne. The Ottoman treaty was the opportunity he had been waiting for. Murdered him in his sleep, I barley escaped.

VLAD

Treacherous slag. Europe is facing the greatest threat it has ever seen and we spend the whole time killing our own.

Vlad gazes at his dragon pendant, scrutinizing the insignia.

VLAD (CONT'D)

This is why the Dragon Order was originally founded. Look at the insignia, the all powerful dragon is being choked by its own tail.

The fire reflects off of the chocking dragon.

VLAD (CONT'D)

We are the Dragon. Wallachia, Moldavia, the people. The tail is her politics, scheming noblemen and Ottoman invaders. If we cut off the tail, we free the dragon.

STEPHEN

And how are we going to do that? Look at us, we're sitting in a cave. Now is the time for survival.

VLAD

Now is the time to rise up and take back what is rightfully ours. Lead those that God chose us to lead.

STEPHEN

What if it leads to our deaths?

VLAD

Then we will go to heaven but first we must earn that. We are knights of the Order of the Dragon Stephen, we were born into war. Let us show them what we have learnt.

Vlad puts out his hand, the fire now reflecting in his eyes.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Join me brother and together we  
will free the Dragon.

Stephen hesitates a moment longer before breaking the  
intensity with a smile.

STEPHEN

You always were a crazy bastard.

As they clasp hands, MUSLIM PRAYER WAILS OUT.

INT. MOSQUE, ADRIANOPOLE - DAY

A TURKISH CHOIR wail at the spectacular funeral of their  
greatest Sultan. MURAD IS DEAD. Radu sits with Mohammed next  
to Sofia and her mother at the front of the congregation.

INT. SOFIA'S CHAMBER, PALACE, ADRIANOPOLE - NIGHT

Sofia now sleeps upon Radu's lap. As Mohammed enters, Radu  
extricates himself without waking her and they step apart.

MOHAMMED

Mother asked me to thank you for  
being so attentive to Sofia these  
past few days. She seems to have  
inherited some of father's fondness  
for you.

RADU

I wish I could do more. It tortures  
me to see her in such pain.

Although Mohammed grieves too, the business of becoming  
Sultan fills his mind.

MOHAMMED

I have called for all of the forces  
from across my empire to assemble  
outside of Constantinople. To honor  
my father, we will conquer the  
great city for the first time in  
history.

Radu is shocked to find himself included in these plans.

RADU

I want no part in that.

MOHAMMED

This is inevitable, Radu.  
Constantinople stands on a small  
piece of land, surrounded for  
hundreds of miles by my empire.  
They know they are beaten.

RADU

Then what do you want from me?

MOHAMMED

I would prefer to take the city  
intact, without unnecessary  
bloodshed. Constantine will not  
negotiate with me, you he would  
give audience.

RADU

And if they do not surrender?

MOHAMMED

Then we take it by force.

Radu remains reluctant.

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)

I need to know I can rely on you,  
Radu. This is our destiny, first we  
take Constantinople then we move  
for Europe. You will be king of  
Wallachia, with my sister as your  
queen.

RADU

There is still no word from Vlad?

Mohammed shakes his head no, clasping Radu's shoulders.

MOHAMMED

We are young, rich and favored by  
fortune. We shall surpass Hannibal,  
Caesar and Alexander by far. Can I  
rely on your support, brother?

Radu turns away from Mohammed's oppressive stare, the  
decision hanging in the balance.

EXT. WALLACHIA, NARROW FOREST ROAD - DAWN

Cold misty morning. A party of TRANSYLVANIAN MERCHANTS make  
their descent into Wallachia, their carts weighed down with  
merchandise. All movement stops as they encounter a fallen  
tree obstructing the path. A FAT MERCHANT kicks his laborer.

FAT MERCHANT

Don't just stand there, start cutting.

Suddenly an arrow slams into the fat merchant's shoulder.

VOICE O.S

Why don't you cut it fat man?

Vlad swings down from a nearby tree, bow in hand. Out of the mist emerges Stephen and his men. The merchant whimpers.

VLAD

Be quiet, it's only a flesh wound. In case there is any confusion, this is a robbery. We will take only what we need, we don't want you to starve.

Vlad is enjoying himself as his men unload all weaponry from the merchants carts and disappear into the forest.

VLAD (CONT'D)

You're on your way to Tirgoviste?

LABORER

Yes Sir.

VLAD

Send my regards to the king. Tell him Vlad will see him soon.

With that Vlad is gone. The merchant party slowly relax, realizing they are once again alone.

FAT MERCHANT

Damn blasted, idiots. What do I pay you for? Get this tree moved.

EXT. WALLACHIA, MOUNTAIN PASS - NIGHT

It is night as the merchant party make their accent back to Transylvania. A successful day judging by their empty carts. SIX MERCENARIES now accompany them, protection.

The party round a corner to see TWO HORSEMEN block the path ahead. Immediately the mercenaries take formation, four guard the merchants while two approach the horsemen.

Then flaming arrows slam into the ground igniting lines of oil soaked straw. Walls of flames shoot up, trapping the merchants. When the flames die, Vlad and his men have once again surrounded them. Vlad addresses the head mercenary.

VLAD

Each of these merchants has a pouch  
of gold, bring them to me.

The mercenary does as commanded. The merchants are livid.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Have you been paid yet for your  
services?

MERCENARY

No sir.

Vlad empties out a dozen gold ducats into his hand.

VLAD

Distribute these amongst your men.  
I have work for you. You will be  
well paid and treated with respect.  
Those that wish to join us must  
come now.

All of the mercenaries and four of the laborers join. Vlad is  
assembling an army.

INT. STABLES, MANOR HOUSE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

Vlad creeps through the STABLES of a MANOR HOUSE, appraising  
the sleeping horses. He chooses one, untying the rope. Then a  
noise makes him spook and he merges into the shadows.

A CLOAKED FIGURE approaches and crouches by the same horse,  
STEALING IT. Silhouetted against the moonlight, Vlad realizes  
the figure is a WOMAN.

VLAD

That's my horse.

The woman spins, striking Vlad dumb. She is a vision. Jet  
black hair, bright green eyes, olive skin.

WOMAN

You don't look like Lord of the  
Manor.

VLAD

I'm not, I was about to steal it.

WOMAN

Then you should have been quicker,  
he's mine now.

The horse wakes, noisily getting to its feet. The woman gently soothes him, effortlessly throwing a saddle onto his back. Vlad watches her, enamored by her brass and beauty.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I ride bareback but this saddle will fetch a few coins in the market.

VLAD

Where are you from?

WOMAN

Here today, somewhere else tomorrow.

She swings up onto the horse. Vlad is just dumbly staring.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

It's not a good idea to wait around here too long. I thank you for the horse.

VLAD

You're welcome. Tell me your name.

WOMAN

Eleanor.

VLAD

I'm Vlad.

ELEANOR

It's been a pleasure.

With that Eleanor gallops out of the stable. Vlad turns to the nearest horse, slapping its arse.

VLAD

Wake up.

EXT. SOUTHERN PLAINS, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

Eleanor rides across a moonlit pasture. Realizing that she is being pursued, she cuts into a thicket of trees. Moments later Vlad arrives, suddenly losing her trail.

ELEANOR O.S.

Are you following me?

Eleanor emerges from the trees.

VLAD

I thought we could ride together a while, talk a little.

ELEANOR

It's not safe to ride with strangers at night you know?

VLAD

You will be safe with me.

ELEANOR

It's not me that I'm worried about.

Vlad smiles, trotting in next to her.

VLAD

You are here today, somewhere else tomorrow. Does that mean you're a Gypsy?

ELEANOR

Some people call us that, we prefer Travelers.

VLAD

So you like living that way?  
(Eleanor scoffs)  
I'm serious.

ELEANOR

It can be a hard life at times, cold in the winter. But we have a lot of freedom. We do whatever we want, go wherever we want.

VLAD

Steal whatever you want.

ELEANOR

Only what we need.

VLAD

It sounds like a great life.

ELEANOR

It is compared to how most people live nowadays.

VLAD

That will all soon change.

Eleanor is intrigued by this odd man. His playfulness juxtaposed by a dark gravitas.

ELEANOR  
What is your story?

VLAD  
I was in prison for a long time,  
not too much more to tell.  
(Reluctant to say more)  
Are you part of a large clan?

ELEANOR  
We don't talk about our family.

Vlad nods, respecting her code.

VLAD  
Were you born into that life?

ELEANOR  
No, I used to live on an estate  
just like this. My parents farmed  
the land.

VLAD  
Why did you leave?

ELEANOR  
The Ottoman treaty hit, our Lord  
raised our taxes. We couldn't  
afford to pay them so we were  
evicted.

A sadness washes over Eleanor, she changes the subject back.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
Why were you in prison?

VLAD  
Victim of circumstance.

ELEANOR  
Spoken like a true criminal. Where?

VLAD  
(Loath to say)  
Adrianople.

Eleanor looks at Vlad, surprise turning to realization.

ELEANOR  
Prince Vlad?

VLAD  
At your service.



Eleanor's demeanor abruptly changes, turning cold.

ELEANOR

I had no idea my Lord, if I had I would not have kept you. I will keep you no longer.

And she spurs her horse, galloping away.

EXT. GYPSY CAMPSITE, FOREST, WALLACHIA - DAY

The GYPSY CAMPSITE is a hub of activity, an outlaw community working together. A hush falls as Vlad brazenly rides in. By the time he dismounts he is surrounded by thirty men, all of them harder than a coffin nail.

VLAD

I come here with an offer.

One man steps forward. He is rugged with piercing black eyes and a scar from ear to ear. This is CALIN, KING OF THE GYPSIES.

CALIN

The prince, the prisoner, the gypsy who would be king. I've been watching you Vlad.

Eleanor stands with another woman keenly watching the interaction. Vlad locks eyes with her.

VLAD

Who are you?

CALIN

You better look me in the eye when you address me son. I am Calin, king of the realm not controlled by the castle. I own these hills. If you steal, I get a piece.

Vlad takes a pouch of gold from his belt, tosses it to Calin.

VLAD

Lend me your support. Help me retrieve my throne and I will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams.

CALIN

That's a lot of gold.  
(His men laugh)  
(MORE)

CALIN (CONT'D)

If we want gold, we can rob the treasury. Why should we help you?

VLAD

Because your countrymen starve while this illegitimate bastard king and his corrupt noblemen get rich. It is time to give Wallachia back to the people.

GYPSY MAN

It was your father caused all this trouble in the first place when he agreed to the Ottoman treaty.

VLAD

It cost him his life and I spent ten years in prison. As God is my witness that will not happen again.

CALIN

What will you do when the Ottoman return?

VLAD

We will stand strong and fight, the whole country united. But for that we must give the people something worth fighting for.

Eleanor calls over the crowd.

ELEANOR

And how will you do that?

VLAD

I will cut taxes to the noblemen, give each man equal right to this land.

CALIN

The noblemen will go to war.

VLAD

With what men? Those that we just freed from their slavery?

Calin regards Vlad, intrigued.

CALIN

Alright Vlad, you've won my ear. Join me for a drink.

Vlad nods, following Calin through the crowd. As he passes Eleanor he gives her a wink. Her friend watches with a grin.

GYPSY GIRL

He's a lively lad. You didn't tell me he was handsome.

ELEANOR

I didn't notice.

Bullshit. The girls watch him go.

EXT. GYPSY CAMPSITE, FOREST, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad sits with Calin and his generals. They pass a bottle of Palinca.

CALIN

When would you want to move?

VLAD

Easter Sunday. The noblemen will be at the castle for the celebrations.

CALIN

I already have a couple of men in the castle.

(Off of Vlad's surprise)

I told you, I was going to rob the treasury.

His men laugh.

VLAD

Gypsy bastards.

More laughter. Calin regards Vlad evenly.

CALIN

If we make you king and you turn out to be like all the rest of them, your reign will be short and your death will be brutal. You understand?

VLAD

I swear, I want only what is best for Wallachia.

Now it is Vlad who challenges Calin.

VLAD (CONT'D)

But if we do this, there is no turning back. It will be a rough road, I need to know you will be there with me to ride it out.

CALIN

I didn't get this pretty being  
afraid of a fight and if I give you  
my word, it's final.

Calin looks at his men, gauging their position. A silent  
decision is made between them.

CALIN (CONT'D)

Looks like you got your soldiers.

He offers Vlad his hand and they clasp. Army complete.

EXT. GYPSY CAMPSITE, FOREST - DAY

Vlad straps down his horse, preparing to leave when Eleanor  
appears behind him.

VLAD

I was looking for you.

ELEANOR

You have a lot of nerve following  
me here.

VLAD

I wanted to see you again.

ELEANOR

You wanted soldiers.

VLAD

That idea came later. I followed  
you because I wanted to see you  
again. You left so abruptly last  
night.

ELEANOR

I am not usually that fond of  
noblemen.

VLAD

We have that in common.

Vlad smiles but Eleanor has not come to banter.

ELEANOR

I told you we were evicted from our  
estate? Well we had nowhere to go,  
so we resisted. I watched both of  
my parents die.

Vlad feels the weight of responsibility.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I am responsible for bringing you here. Don't let us down, do the things you say you will do.

VLAD

I guarantee it. I lost my family through these troubles too, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

I know that, but you will have your revenge and get back your throne. It will be easy to forget about the promises you made to us.

VLAD

I will not forget anything, least of all you.

Eleanor blushes at the declaration.

VLAD (CONT'D)

And if it be your will, I will personally bring to justice the men that killed your family.

ELEANOR

Calin killed them years ago. Calin is my brother.

Vlad is further struck by the serendipity of their meeting.

VLAD

It was no coincidence that we met. Once I have proven myself, I hope you will give me the chance to know you better.

ELEANOR

Perhaps, once you have proven yourself. I wish you luck with the strike.

Eleanor permits him half a smile before returning to the camp. Vlad watches her go, in love for the first time in his life.

EXT. ROAD TO CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

Radu approaches Constantinople, the oldest and wealthiest city in Europe. Thousands of Ottoman soldiers are setting up camp around the city walls.

INT. GRAND MEETING ROOM, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

Radu is led into a magnificent meeting room where two lone figures sit behind a thirty-foot mahogany desk. EMPEROR CONSTANTINE and ARCHBISHOP EDMUND. Constantine rises.

CONSTANTINE.

Welcome to Constantinople Radu, I met with your father many times in this very room. He was a good man.

RADU

I wish I had known him better. It is with a heavy heart that I come here today.

CONSTANTINE.

Please join us. This is our Archbishop, Edmund.

Edmund nods a cold welcome as Radu sits. Silence.

CONSTANTINE. (CONT'D)

Well, we all know why we are here. What is his offer?

RADU

Constantinople will become part of the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan himself assuming the title of Caesar. Christian prayer will be permitted but Islam will become the first religion of the city. All gold and assets will be seized.

Edmund whispers angrily into Constantine's ear.

RADU (CONT'D)

I know it is difficult but I urge you to accept, the alternative is much worse. The Sultan is determined to take Constantinople and he has the force to do it. Save yourselves, surrender the city.

EDMUND

(Enraged)

You come here and presume you can dictate what is best for God's city? You do the devil's bidding, you should not even be permitted on these hallow grounds.

Constantine stands, cutting Edmund off.

CONSTANTINE

Okay Edmund. Would you join me for a walk Radu? There is something I would like to show you.

EXT. BALCONY, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

Constantine has taken Radu to a high vantage point overlooking the city, magnificent in the late afternoon sun.

CONSTANTINE

This city is the shining jewel of the Christian empire, its fall will be a huge blow. Letting it go without a fight would be catastrophic.

Constantine lets that sit as they gaze over the city.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

It breaks my heart to think that all we have done could be reduced to a whisper. It is worth fighting for, no matter how inevitable the outcome.

Radu is racked with guilt. Constantine magnanimous.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

I do not condemn you Radu, you are just misguided. Tell your Sultan my answer is no.

Beyond the city walls, the formidable Ottoman army wait.

EXT. CITY WALLS, CONSTANTINOPLE- DAWN

The sky is red over Constantinople as a final volley of Cannon fire erupts and the walls that have protected the city for a thousand years crumble to the ground. Mohammed can barely contain his excitement as Radu rides up to join him.

MOHAMMED

I did not think you would come.

RADU

I tried not to.

MOHAMMED

Hunyadi is here.

Both men look on. The dome of the Cathedral of St. Sophia ripples like the sun, reflecting the red sky.

EXT. BALCONY OF ST. SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAWN

Archbishop Edmund stands with a JUNIOR PRIEST looking out over the city.

EDMUND

There is an ancient prophecy  
pertaining to Constantinople. 'The  
last Christian emperor will have  
the same name as the first.'  
Constantine.

EXT. CITY STREETS, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

Constantine calms his horse, Hunyadi by his side. They are surrounded by twenty thousand soldiers but all is eerily quiet.

EXT. CITY WALLS, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

Mohammed gives the signal and a volley of arrows descend upon the city, followed by an almighty roar and the Ottoman army rush forward. As they breach the walls PRAYER WALLS OUT.

EXT. CITY STREETS, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

The first Muslim prayer is taking place on the streets of Constantinople. THE CITY HAS FALLEN. Christian casualties are stacked to the sides of the street, whilst Ottoman soldiers bow to Mecca.

Radu moves through the sea of praying men, lost and alone amongst thousands. As he enters the main courtyard he is confronted with a sight that almost brings him to his knees.

HANGING DEAD before him are the bodies of Constantine, Hunyadi and Archbishop Edmund.

EXT. ROAD TO CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

Radu gallops away from Constantinople. Slowing for a moment, he looks back to the city before spurring his horse on.



EXT. TOWN SQUARE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

The township is alive with activity as Calin exits the Tavern and joins another gypsy who waits with their horses. As they ride out of town they pass a CARAVAN of NOBLEMEN who regard the Gypsies like vermin. Calin smiles in return.

CALIN

Just you wait boys, just you wait.

EXT. FOREST, WALLACHIA - DAY

Cazan has joined Vlad in the forest. The men huddle around as Calin returns from his reconnaissance mission.

CALIN

Everything is set for tonight, our boys are on the night watch.

The atmosphere is electric.

CALIN (CONT'D)

Bad news is Constantinople fell a week hence. Mohammed has proclaimed himself Caesar, Muslim emperor of all Christians.

This causes outrage amongst the men.

VLAD

That is why we are here. Nothing we can do until we have the throne.

CALIN

Good news is, your man Hunyadi? Dead as a door nail. Word is your brother Radu bore witness to the hanging.

This takes Vlad off guard.

STEPHEN

The martyr killed by the traitor, poetic.

Vlad shrugs it off, focusing on the task at hand.

VLAD

Eat and rest, we have a long night ahead of us.

EXT. TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

The town and castle are shrouded in darkness, not a soul stirs or candle burns. The Gypsy army creep through the streets, a small party forging ahead led by Calin. There is a brief interaction with the GYPSY CASTLE GUARDS and the gates silently open. Seconds later the Gypsy army swarm in.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

SIX ROYAL GUARDS huddle around a fire in the castle courtyard. Hearing a noise, they reluctantly leave the warmth to investigate. Peering into the black, their eyes readjust to the dark. Then panic. The Gypsy Army charge towards them.

A SEVENTH GUARD appears, surveys the situation and runs back into the castle. Vlad and Calin see him go.

CALIN

I'll get him.

Calin charges directly at the six guards on course for a collision but sidesteps at the last second, going around them and into the castle. Vlad and his men follow through slamming into the guards, cutting them down in seconds.

Vlad peels off from the main group and begins climbing the castle wall.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE - MOMENTS LATER

A hurried wrapping on wood and CHIEF of the CASTLE GUARD enters the room. Wladislav and his wife are startled awake.

CASTLE GUARD

A large force has infiltrated the castle. We must leave at once.

Wladislav dives up and begins dressing, his wife panicked.

WLADISLAV

You stay here.

The Guard is momentarily frozen by the sight of Vlad dropping from the castle roof onto the chamber balcony. The Guard goes for his weapon but Vlad is quicker, throwing a short sword which slams into the Guard's chest, killing him instantly.

Wladislav runs for the door but Vlad beats him to it, slamming the smaller man into the solid oak. He drops to the floor where Vlad pins him with a foot to the throat.

VLAD  
(To Wladislav's wife)  
You might not want to watch this.

In seconds she is out of the door. Vlad bolts it behind her as Wladislav clamors to his feet.

VLAD (CONT'D)  
I've been looking forward to this.

Vlad backhands Wladislav, sending him to the ground again.

WLADISLAV  
It is a coward's work to kill an  
unarmed man.

Vlad tosses his sword onto the bed. Again Wladislav scrambles to his feet.

VLAD  
You buried my father alive! Did you  
nail the coffin shut yourself? All  
that power, you must have felt ten  
feet tall.

Wladislav fakes a lunge and barges past Vlad, attempting to reach the sword. Vlad tackles him to the ground and begins to mercilessly beat him, hitting him over and over and over.

Eventually Wladislav goes limp. Vlad straddles him, pulling back his head to exposing his throat. Wladislav's breath quickens as Vlad leans over him but Vlad only whispers in his ear.

VLAD (CONT'D)  
I'm going to hang you at dawn.

INT. TIRGOVISTE, CASTLE, CHAPEL - DAWN

In the early hours of dawn, the perfidious noblemen stand terrified surrounded by Vlad's coarse soldiers. Vlad kneels before a PRIEST.

PRIEST  
And do you swear to strengthen and  
defend the Orthodox faith, and to  
keep, without disturbance the laws  
and ordinances which the orthodox  
church has laid down?

VLAD  
I do.

The priest steps forward holding the crown.

PRIEST

By what name do you choose to be known?

VLAD

Vlad Dracula, son of the Dragon.

PRIEST

Rise King Dracula. Long live the king.

TERRIFIED COUNCIL

Long live the king.

Vlad looks to the nobleman, their forboding is palpable.

VLAD O.S.

Guilty of grievous actions against your sovereign, it is my great pleasure to sentence you to death.

EXT. TIRGOVISTE, TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A beaten Wladislav now stands with a noose around his neck. The trapdoor opens and the rope snaps taught with a CRACK.

Vlad stands on the GALLOWS platform before the terrified noblemen and a large crowd of villagers and merchants.

VLAD

In these savage times, leniency is a luxury we can no longer afford. I am your rightful king and I promise you this; the slavery and corruption that has crippled this country is soon to end.

The crowd listen, Vlad finding his groove.

VLAD (CONT'D)

We in Wallachia have always swung with the pendulum of power, a small country nestled between two great empires. And we shall continue to swing. But we need not swing like cowards, most subservient to them that barks loudest. You are free men and I ask you to embrace it. Work hard and reap the rewards of your efforts. Make yourselves rich and strong and powerful.

(MORE)

VLAD (CONT'D)

And when the pendulum swings, we  
will rise up together and teach our  
oppressors to war.

Vlad's men cheer, the villagers and merchants joining in.

VLAD (CONT'D)

From this moment forth, you are no  
longer required to pay taxes to the  
noblemen. Every Wallachian has  
equal right to this land.

Now the people are ecstatic, clapping and cheering. The  
noblemen are not.

INT. WAR ROOM, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

The room is in chaos as the noblemen bicker and squabble.  
Silence abruptly falls as Vlad enters, flanked by Calin and  
Cazan. Stephen and a dozen gypsies bring up the rear.

Vlad takes his time, savoring the moment as he sits in his  
throne for the first time.

VLAD

Welcome to my court.

The noblemen exchange looks back and forth but all remain  
silent until the bravest of them stands. This is GALES.

GALES

I for one think this is a total  
outrage. You cannot abolish taxes.

VLAD

I just did.

Another of the noblemen now stands.

NOBLEMAN

As king you are the chosen voice of  
many. Together we govern Wallachia,  
not you alone. Tell him Cazan.

The noblemen rap on the table, calling out their agreement.

VLAD

But you do not govern. You bicker  
and scheme about how best to enrich  
yourselves while the country rots  
and the people starve.

GALES

The people starve because your  
father ruined us.

This sucks the air out of the room. Vlad regards Gales with a  
deadly calm.

VLAD

What is your name, Sir?

GALES

Gales of Severin, your highness.

VLAD

Severin? You have a large estate,  
no wonder you're upset. Speak ill  
of my father again and I will cut  
you down where you stand.

Vlad turns back to the council.

VLAD (CONT'D)

For months no tribute has been paid  
to the Ottoman and yet you did not  
lower taxes, instead you profited  
from your people's suffering. Think  
of this as God's punishment.

Vlad stands, calling the meeting to a close.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Any man found still implementing  
taxes will be imprisoned, one year  
for every ducat taken. Go now and  
spread the good news to your  
people.

The noblemen quickly exit, only Gales lingers.

GALES

I never agreed with your father's  
policies but I supported him. Don't  
expect the same courtesy.

VLAD

I'll manage.

GALES

We'll see.

Gales lets the threat sit for a moment before leaving with a  
curt nod. Vlad turns to Calin with a grin.

VLAD  
I think that went well.

CALIN  
They loved you mate.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

A BONFIRE burns and FIDDLES blast as Vlad celebrates the coronation with his men and the people of Tirgoviste. The gypsies dance raucously in the centre of the throng.

Vlad sits by the fire with Cazan and Stephen. They share a bottle of Palinca.

VLAD  
This is just the first step  
brother, next we take back  
Moldavia.

STEPHEN  
Then all opposition beware.

Calin stumbles over, lifting his bottle in the toast.

CALIN  
May we live respected and die  
regretted. To the king!

Calin takes a long pull from his bottle, belching as he sits. Vlad hands him a document.

VLAD  
The deeds to three hundred acres.  
It was Wladislav's Manor, I don't  
think he needs it now.

Calin smiles, genuinely moved.

CALIN  
Very generous, thank you.

VLAD  
Thank you.  
(Grinning at the thought)  
If only I could see Mohammed's face  
when he hears the news. To  
Wallachia!

They drink the toast, enjoying the victory and alcohol. Vlad turns to Calin with a sly grin.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I have one more favour to ask of you. With your permission I would like to court Eleanor.

Calin is surprised, sneaky bastard. He smiles but there is a glint in his eye.

CALIN

You break her heart and I will cut yours out. You understand?

Vlad agrees with a nod.

EXT. PALACE GARDENS, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

Sofia walks through the palace gardens finding Radu sitting in the late afternoon sun. She wraps her arms around him, breathing him in.

SOFIA

Mohammed is back.

They stay like that a moment longer, neither wanting to move.

INT. MOHAMMED'S STUDY, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

Mohammed dismisses his advisors as Radu enters and rounds the table to greet him. Radu bows before they embrace.

RADU

Did I catch you at a bad time?

MOHAMMED

Not at all, I've been eager to see you.

Mohammed offers Radu a chair and they sit.

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)

You left Constantinople so quickly.

RADU

I had to get away from there. I felt sick to have been a part of it.

MOHAMMED

And how do you feel now?



RADU

The same. I am equal parts of two things that are determined to destroy each other. I am too involved in both to fight for either.

MOHAMMED

So you must fight for both.

RADU

Clearly that is not possible.

MOHAMMED

Accepting ones destiny is never easy. Most men don't and are forgotten the moment they die. That is not who we are.

RADU

Do not talk to me in riddles, Mohammed.

MOHAMMED

You wish to walk away because it pains you to fight, yet you are in a unique position to facilitate peace. As you know, Vlad has taken the throne. He is refusing to honor our treaty. You can negotiate with him; convince him to cooperate.

RADU

You know as well as I do Vlad's feeling towards Ottoman rule, he will never agree to your treaty. Which leaves what? Declare war? This is exactly what just happened in Constantinople.

MOHAMMED

We were born to bear arms and conquer whatever is before us.

RADU

*I was not.*

Radu is unmovable in his resolve. Finally Mohammed relents with a sigh.

MOHAMMED

So what will you do?

RADU

Live a simple life, not prince nor politician, just a husband and father. But I would still ask for Sofia's hand.

MOHAMMED

I had hoped you would be such an asset in Europe.

(Nodding his consent)

You will have to convert to Islam. Sofia is still an Ottoman Princess, your children must be born of pure blood.

Radu nods, he knew this would be the compromise. Mohammed offers his hand and they shake.

EXT. CAMPSITE, MOUNTAIN PLAIN, WALLACHIA - DAY

Close on blood stained hands. Eleanor sits at the edge of the campsite skinning a dozen rabbits. It is messy work but her eyes are focused on a beautiful meadow of wildflowers.

A low rumble starts to shake the ground, a cloud of dust on the horizon. Something is approaching. In seconds the camp are running for the safety of the surrounding forest.

Moments later the camp is empty as a SHOAL OF PRIZE HORSES thunder in, Vlad and Calin leading the way. Calin lets out a piercing whistle and the Gypsies reemerge from the trees.

CALIN

Our new King has given us freehold on three hundred acres. Each of you is now landowner.

The gypsies cheer and excited scramble after the horses. Vlad searches the crowd for one face.

EXT. CAMPSITE, MOUNTAIN PLAIN, WALLACHIA - DAY

Eleanor kneels washing her hands and face. Vlad approaches, a spectacular BLACK STALLION tethered to his own horse.

VLAD

Eleanor.

Eleanor spins, embarrassed but clearly delighted to see him.

ELEANOR

I was skinning rabbits.

VLAD  
You look beautiful.

She rolls her eyes, playing it cool.

ELEANOR  
Congratulations, so now you are king.

VLAD  
And already all taxes have been cut.

Eleanor smiles, giving him his due.

ELEANOR  
What are you doing back here?

VLAD  
I came to get you.

ELEANOR  
You came to get me? Where are you going to take me?

VLAD  
Everywhere you ever wanted to go. The horse is for you.

Eleanor looks at the Stallion, a magnificent animal. She cuts the tether and mounts him with ease.

ELEANOR  
He's incredible, thank you.

She leans over to Vlad as though to kiss him but instead she cuts the strap on his saddle, causing it to slide from the horse. Vlad hops off as she gallops away.

EXT. LAKE CLEARING, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad rides into a beautiful clearing to find Eleanor standing by the lake waiting for him. As Vlad dismounts she becomes concerned, seeing now that he walks with a limp.

ELEANOR  
Were you injured?

VLAD  
No, I just haven't ridden bare back in a while.

Vlad takes long strides stretching his legs. Eleanor laughs, he looks like an idiot.

VLAD (CONT'D)

This is a nice place.

ELEANOR

We have been spending the summers in this area for years. I used to swim in this lake as a child.

VLAD

Would you like to spend this summer in the castle with me?

Eleanor is momentarily taken aback.

ELEANOR

You are very direct aren't you?

VLAD

When you want something this badly it's the only way you can be.

ELEANOR

(Flattered)

I believe you are a good man Vlad but we have to be realistic. It could never work between you and I. You are king now, I am still a gypsy girl.

VLAD

Until you marry me and then you will be a queen.

Eleanor smiles at the clumsy proposal.

ELEANOR

We barely know each other and what do I know of being a queen?

VLAD

Everything.

Vlad takes her hands, facing her with total conviction.

VLAD (CONT'D)

And I know everything that I need to about you. You are strong and clever and beautiful and you care for this country. And most importantly I know that I love you.

Eleanor is flushed, she wants to say yes.

VLAD (CONT'D)

A king is only as strong as his  
queen, I need you. Marry me.

ELEANOR

I need to think about it, Vlad.

VLAD

No you don't.

Vlad pulls her into him and they kiss as though they have starved a lifetime for each other. As their passion mounts they part for a second and Vlad whispers in her ear...

VLAD (CONT'D)

Marry me.

INT. CHURCH, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad and Eleanor stand before a priest. She looks beautiful in a plain white dress and flowers in her hair.

VLAD

In accordance with the rite of our  
Holy Father, I receive you as mine,  
so that you may be my wife and I  
your husband.

Vlad kisses his bride, never happier.

INT. MOSQUE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

Radu and Sofia stand before the HIGH SHEIKH, a massive congregation behind them. Mohammed takes Sofia's hand.

MOHAMMED

Under witness of Allah, I give you  
my sister's hand. Do you swear to  
protect her always?

RADU

I do.

Radu kisses his bride, never happier.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Eleanor's eyes are closed as Vlad carries her over the threshold of their bedchambers.

When she opens them she sees that hundreds of candles line every surface. Slowly they unwrap one another's robes.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad gently places a flower on the pillow next to Eleanor. She is still sleeping as he creeps from the room.

INT. TURKISH VILLA, ANTALYA, TURKEY - DAY

Sofia wakes in the bedroom of their NEW VILLA, on the outskirts of PORT ANTALYA. She crosses to their balcony and wraps her arms around Radu who sits watching the sun rise.

SOFIA

We are going to be very happy here.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Calin waits with a contingent of soldiers, ready for departure. Vlad embraces Stephen farewell.

VLAD

Just stay calm and keep breathing.  
God is with you, sorry that I  
cannot be.

STEPHEN

You have a country to run. Today I  
go to take back my throne, without  
you that would never have been  
possible.

VLAD

We are in this together brother, we  
succeed or fail together.

Calin salutes Vlad as they file out of the courtyard.

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

The council is in uproar as three noblemen are ARRESTED. One of them pulls against his guards, demanding Vlad's audience.

NOBLEMEN

We have always taxed our tenants.  
When you die, which I am sure will  
be very soon, we will continue  
exactly where we stopped.

VLAD

By the time you get out of prison,  
you will have no land left to tax.

Guards drag the man away, Vlad turning to the rest of the noblemen.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I made it very clear what would  
happen if the laws were broken.  
None of you are above the law.

Gales locks eyes with his fellow noblemen. Cazan nervous of the powerful enemies Vlad is making.

INT. CASTLE, SUCEAVA, MOLDAVIA - DAY

Intense fighting has broken out within the corridors of the castle. Calin and Stephen fight their way through the mess.

INT. THRONE ROOM, CASTLE, SUCEAVA - DAY

KING PETRU sits on his throne, listening with terror to the approaching sounds of violence. Then all goes quiet and the door to the room bursts open. Stephen enters followed by Calin and his men. Petru's FOUR GUARDS drop their weapons.

STEPHEN

Hello uncle.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Eleanor wakes to find another flower on her pillow in place of Vlad. She takes it with her to the balcony where she looks down on the township below.

EXT. TOWNSHIP, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad and Cazan ride through the once again bustling market. Business is good, the people are happy. Cazan looks proudly at Vlad.

CAZAN

You're doing very well, Vlad. The  
people have never been happier.  
Just be careful with the noblemen.

VLAD

Soon there will be no noblemen and Wallachia will be a far better place without them.

CAZAN

I know your plans. I just ask that until they are gone you be a little more cautious with them.

Vlad nods, appreciating the concern.

INT. CELL, PRISON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Gales sits with the three imprisoned noblemen.

NOBLEMEN

You have to get us out of here, Gales.

GALES

Stop your whining, that is why I am here. You will owe me for this though.

NOBLEMEN

We will give you anything you want, just get us the hell out of here.

Gales smiles, this might all work out to his advantage.

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE, HUNGARY - DAY

A YOUNG MONK comes to the door of his MONASTERY where Gales waits with an ATTRACTIVE OLDER WOMAN.

THE MONK

Hello mother, I was not expecting you.

GALES

Forgive this intrusion Vlad, but it is imperative I talk with you. I am Gales of Severin, I ask for only an hour of your time.

The Monk looks curiously at his mother, she can barely contain her excitement.

THE MONK

It is honor to meet you sir, please come in.



The Monk steps aside and Gales enters the monastery.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Once again Eleanor wakes to find a flower on her pillow and Vlad nowhere in sight. She sighs, smelling the flower before turning to the balcony when she jumps back with shock.

Vlad is sitting next to the bed, waiting for her to wake.

ELEANOR

You scared me. How long have you been waiting there to do that?

VLAD

About two hours.

ELEANOR

You're an idiot.

Vlad crawls onto the bed, Eleanor leans down to kiss him.

VLAD

Stephen took Moldavia, Calin is fine.

ELEANOR

Calin is always fine. What are you doing still here?

VLAD

I have to meet with Mohammed's envoys this afternoon, that will be enough work for one day. I thought we could go for a walk.

Eleanor smiles coyly, leaning down to kiss Vlad again.

ELEANOR

Maybe we go for a walk in an hour.

EXT. LAKE, TIRGOVISTE HILLS, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad and Eleanor walk hand in hand around a lake. Half a dozen guards relax in the distance, waiting to accompany them back to the castle.

ELEANOR

I thought you were going to take me to the black sea.

VLAD

Next month, I cannot leave now.

ELEANOR

I heard that months ago. Remember when you used to romance me?

(Mimicking him)

I'll take you everywhere you've ever wanted to go. Remember that?

VLAD

Okay, enough. We will go next month, you have my word.

An eagle dives down into the middle of the lake, fishing.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I could catch an eagle with my bare hands when I was a child.

ELEANOR

I bet you were a nightmare when you were a child.

VLAD

Just like our sons will be.

ELEANOR

You're so sure I will give you boys?

VLAD

Someone will.

ELEANOR

(Mock outrage)

And I will kill you while you sleep.

SPLASH. Something disrupts the water behind them.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

What was that?

Then THUD, an arrow slams into Eleanor's leg. BAM, another slams into Vlad's shoulder. Vlad spins to see movement in the trees and calls out to his guards.

VLAD

Assassin!

He snaps off Eleanor's arrow and pushes her into the lake.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Get under the water, swim out to the middle.

Another arrow splashes into the lake. Vlad pushes Eleanor under the water before sprinting towards the treeline in sharp zigzags. His guards are too far away to be of any use.

One more arrow hits the ground at Vlad's feet but as he gets closer to the treeline the ASSASSIN spooks and abandons the mission. The chase is on, Vlad gaining.

But then the arrow in his back begins to take toll. Mustering the last of his strength, Vlad launches his sword like a spear. It slams between the assassin's shoulders. The assassin falls face forward. In seconds Vlad is on him.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Who sent you? You can die in peace or in terrible pain. It makes no difference now if you tell me. Who sent you?

Vlad takes out his dagger and pushes his fingers into the assassin's mouth, pulling out his tongue.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I'm going to cut out your tongue and leave you here to die unless you tell me who sent you.

The assassin begins to cry but still he does not talk. Vlad puts his knife to the tongue.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Don't make me do this, just tell me who sent you.

ASSASSIN

Vlad. Vlad the Monk. Kill me, please just kill me.

VLAD

Where are you from?

ASSASSIN

Severin.

(Realizes that was stupid)  
Please don't hurt my family.

VLAD

No one will harm your family.

Vlad slits the assassins throat. While he searches the body, his gypsy guards arrive, puffing and panting.

GUARD

Who's this useless dead bastard?

Vlad studies the assassin's pouch of gold. Vlad the Monk?

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

A gypsy nurse bandages Vlad's shoulder. Eleanor sits in the corner, shaken. A knock and Cazan hurries in.

CAZAN

I just heard. Are you okay?

VLAD

We're both fine, we were lucky.

Vlad crosses to Eleanor, embracing her tightly.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I love you. I will be back soon.

She nods and Vlad heads out, Cazan in tow.

INT. CASTLE CORRIDOR, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad leads Cazan into a small room, shutting the door for privacy.

VLAD

The assassin said he was sent by a man called Vlad the Monk. Does that name mean anything to you?

It is clear from Cazan's reaction that it does.

CAZAN

He is your brother.

Vlad is shocked silent.

CAZAN (CONT'D)

The result of an affair before you were born. It meant nothing and for years the mother's claim went ignored. But after losing you and against my advice, your father sought the child out. They only met once but it was enough for her to confirm his legitimacy.

VLAD

So this bastard thinks he has claim  
to my throne?

CAZAN

He is from the royal male bone.  
This is why you must be careful  
with the noblemen.

VLAD

What do you mean?

CAZAN

You have made many powerful enemies  
Vlad. I doubt The Monk could do  
this without support.

VLAD

So the noblemen champion his claim?  
The assassin said he was from  
Severin.

(Fury building)  
Gales.

CAZAN

You cannot be rash Vlad, you must  
be certain before you act.

VLAD

And end up buried alive like my  
father? This requires a decisive  
response.

Vlad storms from the room leaving Cazan deeply concerned.

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

TWO OTTOMAN ENVOYS wait impatiently whilst the noblemen  
gossip rabidly. A hush falls as Vlad strides in and sits  
heavily into his throne. The Envoys step forward.

ENVOY ONE

We were shocked to hear of your  
trouble this morning, thanks be to  
Allah your injuries were not more  
severe.

VLAD

Indeed. What do you want?

ENVOY ONE

Sultan Mohammed sends his best  
regards.

(MORE)

## ENVOY ONE (CONT'D)

He compliments you on your success  
and commends your ability as king.  
Now he must insist that you resume  
your alliance in full.

## VLAD

We have no alliance.

The second envoy immediately produces a scroll.

## ENVOY TWO

This is a signed treaty made  
between your fathers, turning  
Wallachia over to control of the  
Ottoman Empire.

## VLAD

May I?

Vlad briefly looks at the document before setting it alight.

## VLAD (CONT'D)

I just took control back.

The Envoys are furious.

## ENVOY ONE

Foolishness, that changes nothing.  
Wallachia belongs to the Ottoman  
Empire. You owe twenty thousand  
ducats tribute which you will pay  
immediately or feel our wrath. And  
our assassins do not miss.

Vlad whirls on the envoy, cutting him down in his tracks. The  
second envoy is routed to the spot, prostrate with fear.

## VLAD

You do not make threats in my  
court. Wallachia is a free country,  
controlled by no one but her king.  
If the Sultan would like to visit  
in person and discuss our future as  
equals, I will meet him. But never  
again send messengers to make  
threats. Be gone.

The Envoy hurries out leaving his colleague dead on the  
ground. Vlad turns to the council.

## VLAD (CONT'D)

That takes care of that. Now, who  
here knows a man called Vlad the  
Monk?

Vlad tosses the Assassin's pouch of gold onto the table in front of Gales. Gales tries to swallow the boulder in his throat.

VLAD (CONT'D)  
Reimbursement. Stand up.

Gales does as he is told. Vlad touches the tip of his bloody sword to his throat.

VLAD (CONT'D)  
Where is he?

GALES  
I don't know what you're talking about.

Vlad throws the gold coins in Gales face.

VLAD  
Are these not your coins? The assassin told me you sent him. Tell me where to find the Monk and I will spare your life.

GALES  
I have never met him. I hear he stays in the Hungarian border towns.

VLAD  
Is that what you hear? Good.

Vlad nods, lowering the sword. Only to bring it swiftly back up, slicing Gales from ear to ear. Gales falls to the ground.

VLAD (CONT'D)  
(To a Gypsy guard)  
Tell Calin to go to Hungary, find this bastard Vlad the Monk.

CAZAN  
Vlad in light of what has just happened, we may have serious problems with the Ottoman. It may not be wise to instigate trouble in Hungary where we currently have peace.

VLAD  
I see no peace in this son of a whore and his supporters plotting to take my throne.  
(MORE)

VLAD (CONT'D)

To have any chance against the  
Ottoman we must have unity in  
Wallachia.

Vlad walks to the door, leaving the council stunned.

VLAD (CONT'D)

(Re Gales)

And put that slag on a spike, teach  
people what happens to traitors.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad lies in bed wide awake, his mind reeling. Eleanor sleeps soundly next to him. Unable to contain his anxiety, Vlad rises and goes to the balcony to pace. On the common below, torches illuminate the IMPALED body of Gales.

Suddenly spooked by a noise from the darkness, Vlad extinguishes the balcony lanterns, plunging the space into darkness. Awoken by the commotion, Eleanor watches him for a moment before rising to join him.

ELEANOR

You cannot sleep again?

Vlad shakes his head, peering out into the darkness.

VLAD

Tell the maid not to light these  
lanterns again.

Eleanor nods, looking over to the body of Gales. A shiver runs down her spine.

ELEANOR

Maybe you should take down the  
body. Let this whole thing rest.

VLAD

He stays until the crows have  
stripped his flesh.

ELEANOR

Vlad.

Vlad continues to stare off into the night.

VLAD

It cannot rest. He is still out  
there somewhere, waiting. Until he  
is found, neither of us are safe.



ELEANOR

Calin will find him. Nobody would dare try anything now anyhow.

Vlad smiles, though her words offer little comfort.

VLAD

I don't know what I would do if I lost you.

ELEANOR

I'm not going anywhere. We just need to stay close to the castle until he's found.

Something about this strikes an ugly chord with Vlad.

VLAD

How long will that be? I cannot let this bastard make us prisoners in our own home.

A new resolve begins to slowly take hold of Vlad. He hurriedly reenters their chambers and begins dressing.

ELEANOR

Where are you going?

VLAD

If he will not to come to me, I will go to him.

ELEANOR

It is the middle of the night, Vlad. This is how you will get killed!

Vlad kisses her, his resolve now outweighing his melancholy.

VLAD

I have to do this. Things will be better when I return.

He kisses her again but when he leaves it is without her blessing.

EXT. CALIN'S ESTATE, WALLACHIA - DAWN

Vlad arrives at Calin's PALATIAL MANOR HOUSE with TWENTY MEN. He scales the steps and enters the front door which has been left wide open.

INT. HALLWAYS, CALIN'S MANOR HOUSE - DAWN

Many people seem to be occupying this house. Vlad finally locates Calin in an upstairs bedroom, unconscious with a girl and a bottle of Palinca. Vlad kicks him awake, not amused.

VLAD

Have you located the Monk?

CALIN

My men are looking, it might take some time.

VLAD

I don't have any time. He may have already sent more assassins to put an arrow through my heart. Get ready, we are leaving in an hour.

Calin looks down at his beautiful naked lady, sighing heavily before dragging himself to his feet.

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE, HUNGARY - DAY

HUNGARIAN VILLAGERS watch in horror as Vlad's men escort petrified Monks out of the monastery. Calin exits shaking his head. A TALL BROTHER musters his courage, turning to Vlad.

TALL BROTHER

Whoever you are looking for, he is clearly not here. Leave now.

Vlad slaps the Brother to his knees making the crowd gasp.

TALL BROTHER (CONT'D)

Through pain I feel God's salvation.

Vlad grabs the Brother by the hair, pulling him close.

VLAD

You will be begging for God's mercy by the time I am finished. Where is Vlad?

The Brother will still not talk. Vlad is about to strike him again when a YOUNG BOY rushes forward.

BOY

A Monk hides in the chapel of Yagis, two miles yonder.

VLAD

Thank you.  
 (To the Brother)  
 Saved by a child.

EXT. CHAPEL, VILLAGE OF YAGIS, HUNGARY - DAY

Calin and his men surround the SMALL CHAPEL. A handful of curious villagers have gathered in the distance. Suddenly the chapel door bursts open and Vlad the Monk falls out. Vlad brings up the rear, pulling him to his feet.

VLAD

Walk.

THE MONK

I swear I know nothing about these crimes you speak of.

VLAD

Then why were you hiding?

The Monk has no reply. Vlad pushes him to start walking again, moving towards the back of the chapel.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I just don't understand why you went to them instead of coming to me? I am your brother, I would have given you land and titles. Instead you sent an assassin who shot my wife.

Vlad leaps forward, knocking The Monk back to the ground.

THE MONK

I just listened to what they had to say. I know nothing of an assassin.

VLAD

He gave me your name.

The Monk scrambles back to his feet. Realizing this is all over his head, he starts to cry.

THE MONK

A man called Gales visited me, all I did was listen. He said you were ruining Wallachia and it was my duty from God to stop it. I swear, all I did was listen.

VLAD

Then why were you hiding? Did you agree to take my throne?

The Monk holds his crucifix, tears streaming down his face.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Did you agree to take my throne?

THE MONK

Yes. But I knew nothing of an assassin, I swear.

VLAD

How else did you think you would get it? Get down on your knees.

The Monk is suddenly struck with a ray of hope.

THE MONK

I am still a Monk of the Orthodox Church. As knight of the Dragon you are sworn to harm no Christians.

His words resonate in Vlad but still he pushes him to his knees. Again The Monk cracks, pleading

THE MONK (CONT'D)

Please, I will disappear into the monastery. You will never hear from me again, I swear.

VLAD

I cannot take that risk.

Realizing his time has truly come The Monk begins to Pray, raising his crucifix to Vlad as a last form of defense.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Forgive me.

And Vlad slams down his sword. The Monk's mother arrives at the chapel just in time to see her son fall.

MOTHER

No! Murderer!

A Gypsy contains her as Calin crosses to Vlad, unable to disguise his contempt for this act.

VLAD

I know, but it was necessary. Make sure he receives a proper burial.

Vlad mounts his horse and without looking at the Monk's mother, he gallops away.

EXT. TURKISH VILLA, ANTALYA, TURKEY - DAY

A dozen horses ride through the lush countryside of Antalya, Mohammed and his guard. As they approach the estate house, Radu rides out to meet them.

RADU

This is a surprise.

MOHAMMED

I wanted to congratulate you both on your news. You will be an excellent father.

RADU

Sofia will be delighted to see you. She's resting but I will wake her.

MOHAMMED

Let her sleep another hour, give me the grand tour first.

EXT. ORCHARDS, COUNTRY ESTATE, ANTALYA - DAY

Mohammed and Radu walk through groves of fruit trees, all in blossom. The distant ocean sparkles in the afternoon sun.

MOHAMMED

So you like it here?

RADU

Antalya is in an incredible place. Muslims, Christians and Jews all live and work in total harmony.

MOHAMMED

Constantinople now has this same freedom. Muslim and Christian pray side by side. I will bring this same tolerance to the world.

RADU

But at what cost? To try to achieve this against people's will only leads to bloodshed and subjugation, the very antithesis of freedom and tolerance.

Mohammed is philosophical, desensitized to the realities of war.

MOHAMMED

People are malleable, they just need to be led. Mine is the better way. Sometimes sacrifices have to be made for the sake of improvement.

RADU

Easy to say when you make none of the sacrifices.

(A tense beat)

Excuse me, I forget myself. I left politics behind the day I married your sister.

MOHAMMED

(Very serious)

Unfortunately not. My problems with your brother have escalated.

Radu smiles bitterly, now understand the true motive behind this visit.

RADU

I see. Tell me what you have come here to tell me.

MOHAMMED

I move for Hungary in the summer. Your brother refuses to honor our treaty, he killed the envoys I sent to negotiate.

RADU

Why are you telling me this? What do you expect me to do about it?

MOHAMMED

Nothing, but something will need to be done. And when it happens you will become king of Wallachia.

Radu flares, shoving Mohammed against a tree.

RADU

You do not come to my home and talk to me of killing my brother.

Mohammed's guards rush up, but he waves them off.

MOHAMMED

You are heir to the throne and  
married to an Ottoman prince. Like  
it or not you are a part of this.

RADU

Listen to me for the last time. You  
will do as you must, as will Vlad.  
But it has nothing to do with me.

Radu turns to leave, Mohammed calling after him.

MOHAMMED

It is not that simple, Radu. You  
cannot just walk away from this.

RADU

I already have.

Mohammed watches Radu depart, nodding to himself.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad tosses and turns in his sleep, brow glistening with  
sweat. Suddenly he jolts awake, fighting to catch his breath.  
Quietly he rises and slips out of the room. Only now do we  
see that Eleanor is awake, her face a mask of concern.

INT. CHAPEL, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad kneels at the altar, deep in prayer. Then for a flash we  
are back in Hungary, Vlad the Monk raises his crucifix in  
defense.

Vlad snaps open his eyes, haunted by the vision. A large  
crucifix at the altar taunts him. Vlad turns away, slowly  
removing the crucifix from around his neck.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Eleanor wakes to find herself alone in bed. No flower now  
adorns her pillow. She turns to the balcony to see Vlad is  
sitting there, staring off into the distance.

Eleanor goes to him, running her fingers through his hair.

ELEANOR

You could not sleep again?

Vlad just shakes his head, he cannot even look at her now.  
Eleanor sits down, determined to talk to him.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You have barely said two words to me since you returned from Hungary.

VLAD

I don't know what to say, Eleanor. I killed him, he was my brother. It weighs on me.

ELEANOR

You did what you had to do for your family and for your country. Think of the assassin he sent, he was not a brother to you.

VLAD

He was just weak and had been manipulated. It made me think of Radu. I have failed them both.

ELEANOR

You cannot control the actions of other men, Vlad. You are a great king and a great husband, that is all you need to be.

Eleanor turns Vlad's face so that he is looking directly at her.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Now you have to stay strong and continue to set a good example, to the people and to your children.

The way Eleanor says this makes Vlad suddenly curious.

VLAD

Are you with child?

ELEANOR

I'm almost certain.

Suddenly all of Vlad's worries evaporate as he embraces her. They are interrupted by a knock and a YOUNG GUARD enters.

YOUNG GUARD

Forgive this intrusion. Cazan requests I inform you that an Ottoman Envoy has just arrived.

VLAD

I will be down momentarily.

The guard leaves. Even this cannot sour Vlad's joy.



VLAD (CONT'D)

Let me deal with this and I will come straight back. I thank God daily that I found you.

ELEANOR

We are going to be fine, Vlad. There will be more rough times ahead, just remember that we will always have each other.

Vlad kisses her deeply, the light returned to his eyes.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad barrels out of the castle to find Cazan waiting in the courtyard. The Ottoman Envoy remains at the gate, accompanied by a DOZEN GUARDS.

CAZAN

You have to be very careful how you handle this Vlad, another incident like the last could lead to war.

VLAD

Best behavior, you have my word.

Vlad strides across to meet the Envoy.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Welcome back, would you like to come in?

ENVOY

I will keep this brief. Sultan Mohammed proposes you meet, as equals, to discuss the future of Europe.

VLAD

When and where?

ENVOY

Silistra, ten days hence. The river Danube is still frozen enough to cross.

Vlad looks to Cazan who nods his encouragement.

VLAD

I will be there.

The Envoy simply nods and turns to leave. Vlad and Cazan walk back towards the castle.

CAZAN

What do you think?

VLAD

I think it will be a waste of time but we will have to do it sooner or later. Get word to Calin, I'm not going down there alone.

Vlad bounds back into the castle as a WAIL OF AGONY fills the air.

INT. RADU AND SOFIA'S HOME, ANTALYA - NIGHT

Radu cries out, cradling Sofia's prone body. She and the baby have died in the birth. A nurse takes the child away.

RADU

Leave me. Get out!

EXT. RADU AND SOFIA'S HOME, ANTALYA - DAWN

Radu stands over the graves of Sofia and his baby. He looks like a ghost in the early morning mist.

INT. RADU AND SOFIA'S HOME, ANTALYA - NIGHT

Now he sits alone in the villa, drunk, quiet, still, then rage. Everything breakable he smashes.

EXT. RADU AND SOFIA'S HOME, ANTALYA - NIGHT

Flames lick the night. Radu is again motionless as he watches his house and all the dreams it once held vanish to ash.

EXT. DANUBE - DAY

Vlad and Calin lay face down on the thick ice of the frozen Danube. Through an eyeglass, they watch Sultan Mohammed and his guards arrive at the Bulgarian river fortress, SILISTRA.

VLAD

What do you think?

CALIN

I think it's a hornet's nest.

VLAD

You scared?

CALIN

Not since I was a child.

EXT. COURTYARD, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - DAY

Ottoman soldiers watch Vlad and Calin approach on foot across the frozen plain, half a dozen men with them. The general nods to his men.

GENERAL

Be ready.

INT. FORTRESS, SILISTRA - DAY

Inside of the fortress is dark and the passageways narrow. Vlad and Calin are led into a meeting room where Sultan Mohammed sits with his Envoy and General.

Up close to the Sultan, Vlad realizes that it is in fact a DOPPELGANGER. He is identical to Mohammed except for one crucial detail, he does not have the SCAR.

Vlad draws his sword, Calin follows suite.

GENERAL

Guards!

Armed guards rush in from every door, an ambush. Vlad and Calin are forced to drop their weapons. The Envoy appears to be exceedingly pleased with himself.

ENVOY

Unfortunately the Sultan was unable to attend in person but he will see you in Adrianople. You are hereby arrested for breach of Treaty.

The General steps forward, attempting to guide Vlad out of the room. Vlad stops him with a steady hand.

VLAD

I will soon wipe that smile off of your face.

ENVOY

I do not think you are in any position to be making threats. Send my regards to Allah.

Vlad and Calin are roughly escorted from the room.

EXT. COURTYARD, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - NIGHT

Vlad and Calin sit on unsaddled horses, their hands bound behind their backs. They are surrounded by Ottoman soldiers who are readying themselves for departure.

Calin leans back on his horse and howls into the night like a wolf. The howl echoes off of the fortress walls.

OTTOMAN GUARD

Shut up!

EXT. FORTRESS, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - NIGHT

The gates of the fortress creak open and the Ottoman party file out. Vlad and Calin share a nod and spur their horses. They lunge forward, barreling past the guards and out onto the frozen Danube.

As they hit the ice their horses lose traction, sliding to a stop twenty feet from the bank. The Ottoman soldiers dismount and draw their swords, slowly approaching.

Then from the darkness comes a strange SKITTERING SOUND, like metal on ice and a sword slides up to Calin's feet. He picks it up, cutting their binds.

The Ottoman soldiers huddle together as a chorus of howls fill the air around them. Then men start appearing from the darkness. Suddenly the Ottoman are fighting for their lives.

EXT. DANUBE - NIGHT

Vlad's men have regrouped after the fight. Dead Ottoman soldiers litter the ice. The Envoy and Mohammed's doppelganger kneel before Vlad and Calin.

VLAD

We came here to negotiate and they tried to take me prisoner. I think it is time we teach these heathens a lesson in international good manners.

Vlad backhands the Envoy before turning to Mohammed's double.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I want you to send a message to Mohammed.

And Vlad slashes the doppelganger's face giving him a matching scar.

EXT. TOWNSHIP OF SILISTRA, BULGARIA - NIGHT

The town and fortress of Silistra burn. Vlad and his army storm the city, extinguishing any attempts of resistance.

VLAD O.S.

We have no quarrel with the people  
of Bulgaria.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - DAWN

By dawn the city has fallen and many curious Bulgarians have gathered in the town square to hear Vlad speak.

VLAD

You have all lived as slaves under  
the tyranny of the Ottoman empire  
for too long. Any of you who wish  
to live in freedom, amongst  
Christians, you are welcome in  
Wallachia.

(With a wry smile)

Those of you that wish to stay and  
fight alongside the Ottoman, make  
your peace with God and prepare for  
the afterlife.

Vlad's men howl and cheer.

EXT. OCEAN CLIFFS, ANTALYA - DAY

Seagulls squawk and cry overhead. Radu lies motionless on the edge of a cliff, staring up at the blinding sun. Lost in some terrible dream.

A flash of light on the horizon draws his attention. It dances and ripples, getting closer. Radu pulls himself to his knees, waiting for the light to envelop him.

As the light approaches we see that it is men, sun glinting off of their armor. AN OTTOMAN SCOUTING PARTY, looking for Radu. He is delirious, gently they strap him to a horse.

INT. BEDCHAMBER, BOARDING HOUSE, ANTALYA - DAY

Radu sits by the open window, cold compresses on his eyes. He stirs when someone enters the room, emotions surging when he sees that it is Mohammed.

RADU

Forgive me.

MOHAMMED

This was not your fault.

RADU

There is no act without reason. I have sinned too much to be allowed that dream. I should have walked away.

MOHAMMED

You loved each other, you followed your hearts. There is no sin in that.

RADU

And Converting to another God, is there sin in that? Fighting against your own people, is there sin in that? That is what I am being punished for.

Radu gathers himself, Mohammed presses on.

MOHAMMED

So what will you do now?

RADU

I will wait quietly to join them in the afterlife.

MOHAMMED

Foolishness. You feel you have sinned against your God and people, then make amends for it. Start accepting your responsibilities.

RADU

I have no responsibilities.

MOHAMMED

Vlad has declared war. He swept the bank of Bulgaria, destroying towns and recruiting my subjects for his army.

(MORE)

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)

Now he and Stephen are camped on the bank of Wallachia waiting for me. I will meet them and end this for good. I am offering you one last chance to end this quietly.

Radu stands, furious.

RADU

My wife is three weeks in the ground and you come here to ask me to kill my brother.

MOHAMMED

Or convince him to surrender.

RADU

He would never surrender to me!

MOHAMMED

Then perhaps you should kill him, better one man dead than thirty thousand. I am sure another preventable massacre of your people will lie heavily on your conscience.

RADU

And that way you keep your army fresh for Hungary. For all the pain I feel I would not trade it for your vile existence.

Mohammed cares little about the judgement of his old friend.

MOHAMMED

One way or another, Vlad will be gone and you will be king. It is time to save your people.

(Standing to leave)

I leave Antalya tomorrow. I hope you will be joining me.

Mohammed departs leaving Radu to stew. The ocean outside sparkles in the sun.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Months have passed. The Danube has thawed and an army of thirty thousand Christian soldiers are assembled on its bank. They work TENDING CROPS and DIGGING TRENCHES. Occasional glances are cast over the Danube. When will the Ottoman come?

As more time passes the dense WHEAT CROPS that surround the camp begin to flourish in the PARTICULARLY HOT EARLY SUMMER. Men work on their knees spreading straw then burlap at the base of the wheat.

A WATCHMAN in the SURVEILLANCE TOWER snoozes. No vessel has been spotted on the Danube in weeks. He comes to, giving a cursory glance over the river. Now he is awake.

EXT. SURVEILLANCE TOWER, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY

Vlad, Calin and Stephen make their way towards the nervous watchman.

WATCHMAN

I fell asleep Sir.

Vlad quickly climbs the tower and raises his eyeglass to the Danube, shocked by what he sees. A small boat makes its way to Wallachia, RADU ONBOARD. TWO SAILORS man the craft.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad waits on a sandy shore. As Radu arrives, Vlad excitedly pulls him into a tight embrace.

VLAD

Welcome back brother. Have you come to join us?

RADU

I have come to negotiate.

Vlad deflates, covering his disappointment with hostility.

RADU (CONT'D)

Please Vlad, let us work together and find a way to resolve these problems peacefully.

VLAD

You mean surrender.

RADU

To fight is madness. You are facing an army of over a hundred thousand men. If you surrender now and I can convince Mohammed to let you keep your throne. Father made the right choice in your position.



VLAD

Our father was buried alive for that decision! You never saw Wallachia, Radu. It was destroyed, our people were starving.

RADU

You did not see Constantinople. Mohammed slaughtered their army in under a day.

VLAD

They died for their beliefs, as we are willing to. It is a question of patriotism and faith, I would not expect you to understand.

RADU

This is not about you or I or faith. It is about saving the lives of sixty thousand men.

VLAD

Then tell your Sultan not to invade my country! That is the only way this ends peacefully, Radu.

Radu sighs heavily, searching for a way to connect with Vlad.

RADU

All you have ever wanted was a family and to rule your country. You have a chance to keep it all.

VLAD

But to live as an Ottoman slave, none of it would mean anything.

RADU

It would mean something to your child. Do you not wish to see him at least once before you die?

VLAD

I would rather he grow up with the memory of a man willing to die for his beliefs than live with a coward willing to compromise everything.

RADU

Then he will grow up just as angry as you and this will go on forever.

VLAD

Just until the Ottoman realize they  
cannot take away our freedom.

They have obviously reached a stale mate.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Don't come back here, Radu. Let  
Mohammed and I settle this now.

RADU

This is not only the way, Vlad.

VLAD

I am afraid it is.

The brothers regard one another a moment longer before Vlad turns and walks away. Exacerbated, Radu turns back to his boat only to see that one of the Sailors has a bow aimed at Vlad's back.

RADU

Vlad!

The man is about to fire when an arrow rips into his neck. Calin appears from the brush, his bow covering the second Sailor. Vlad and Radu share a long final look.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE - DAY

Vlad and Calin return to the camp to be met by Stephen.

VLAD

It was another trap. We go to war.

STEPHEN

How many men do we face?

VLAD

One hundred thousand.

Vlad and Calin move off leaving Stephen looking nervously to Bulgaria, the faint shadow of a colossal army on its bank.

INT. WAR TENT, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY

A map of Wallachia is spread over a table. Vlad and Stephen paw over it. Cazan enters, exhausted from a long trip.

CAZAN

Hungary will not fight.

VLAD

I didn't expect them to. It does not matter, if we are clever we can defeat them.

CAZAN

My kings, I have faced the Ottoman with an army over twice this size and they destroyed us. I urge you to explore your other options.

VLAD

You fought Murad, Mohammed is not his father. I know I can beat him.

(Referencing the map)

Every past war has been fought protecting the Danube, concentrating our forces in one small area. With the bigger army they will always win.

CAZAN

Exactly.

VLAD

So we let them in. Invading is easy, occupying a hostile country is very difficult. We let them in and use their numbers against them.

CAZAN

If we let them in, thousands of civilians will die.

VLAD

Most of our men have already come to join the fight, the women and children we will evacuate to the north.

Cazan is not convinced, he looks to Stephen.

CAZAN

Stephen?

After a moment of hesitation, Stephen nods.

STEPHEN

I am with Vlad.

Cazan sighs, resigned.

CAZAN

I said my piece. What would you have me do?

VLAD

Sit down, I'll explain everything.

EXT. CHRISTIAN'S CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE - NIGHT

A NERVOUS YOUNG SOLDIER stands at the edge of a six foot trench, dug twenty feet from the bank of the Danube. He peers into the blackness over the river then glances to his side and we see that he is joined by the ENTIRE CHRISTIAN ARMY.

Across the trench Vlad rides out to face them.

VLAD

Today the Sultan sent his best negotiator, my brother, to offer us another treaty. When I did not accept they tried to kill me. What does that tell you? I think these slags are afraid to fight us.

The men roar and cheer.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Twelve years ago my father surrendered without a fight. Many of you thought that was a mistake, ten years of slavery confirmed it. Now we are free again and they want to take that from us simply because they have a bigger army? I say come and try.

More cheers, Calin grins.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I fought Mohammed once, man to man. He was in the infirmary for a month. One of us is worth ten of them, for we have a reason to fight. We fight, as vengeance for ten years of slavery. We fight, because it is our duty to protect Christendom. We fight, because we are Wallachians and no one will rule us.

The men roar with enthusiasm. Vlad nods to Calin who bends forward and dips his ARROW into a FLAMING POT OF OIL. The rest of the soldiers follow suit.

Calin draws back and releases his ARROW which is immediately followed by thirty thousand more, their flames illuminating the sky. Now we see the Danube is filled with HUNDREDS OF OTTOMAN LONG BOATS.

Vlad jumps the trench, joining Calin and Stephen.

CALIN

Nice speech.

Stephen watches apprehensively as arrows to rain down upon the Ottoman, claiming the first victims of this battle.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE - NIGHT

Ottoman soldiers rush the Wallachian bank, diving into the trench to avoid the merciless arrows. As they scramble to climb out of the other side, the first line of Christian soldiers charge forward, cutting them down.

Arrows continue raining down upon the approaching Ottoman boats. But soldiers keep coming and soon thousands are flooding into the trench. As it becomes difficult to hold them, Stephen rushes to Vlad.

STEPHEN

I think we should call the retreat.

Vlad nods and Stephen signals the HORN MAN, who blows the call to retreat and the Christian army disappear back into the dense crops that surround the battle field.

Ottoman soldiers continue to pour onto Wallachia, shielding themselves from the last volley of arrows as they wait for the next command.

OTTOMAN GENERAL

Pursue!

They rush forward into the tall crops. As hundreds disappear into the wheat, another volley of FLAMING ARROWS descend upon them. The arrows ignite the previously oil soaked ground, turning the fields of crops into a flaming inferno. The Ottoman soldiers burn and scream but cannot escape as they are trapped against a wall of their arriving countrymen.

EXT. MOHAMMED'S BOAT, DANUBE - NIGHT

Mohammed's boat idles a safe distance from shore. He angrily watches as his soldiers slowly retreat from the flames. The sky line looks beautiful on fire, everything awash in a thin orange haze. Mohammed fires Radu an icy stare.

EXT. MOHAMMED'S BOAT, BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DAY

The sun rises casting a golden glow over the BLACKENED EARTH. The entire Ottoman army now stand on Wallachian soil. HUNDREDS of OTTOMAN CORPSES are being buried in the trench.

Radu arrives, somberly surveying the carnage. Mohammed barrels past him followed by his FIRST GENERAL, MASTIS.

MOHAMMED

I want us marching within the hour.

EXT. SOUTHERN VILLAGE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad rides towards a village with a BATTALION OF SOLDIERS. The land behind them is on FIRE, the sky black with smoke.

As they thunder into the village, a PRIEST steps into their path, his CRUCIFIX raised. Vlad spooks, rearing his horse.

PRIEST

We want no trouble.

Vlad calms and faces the gathering congregation of villagers.

VLAD

The Ottoman have invaded, they will be here within two days. I need all able bodied men to join the fight. Women and children pack all you can carry and head north. Go now.

The villagers disperse. Vlad turns to his men.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Herd every strong animal away, slaughter the rest, dump their carcasses in the well. Destroy anything that could be of use.

The villagers watch in horror as Vlad's men destroy their homes.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - DAY

The Christian army rest, taking cover from the intense afternoon sun. Calin enters the camp with FIVE HUNDRED MEN, most of who are simple farmers. Stephen intercepts him as he heads towards his tent.

STEPHEN

I need to talk to you. What do you make of all of this?

CALIN

All of what?

STEPHEN

You know what I'm talking about. We are playing cat and mouse with an army over three times our size and destroying this country in the process. Does Vlad know what he's doing?

Calin shrugs, also conflicted but fiercely loyal.

CALIN

He's brought us this far.

STEPHEN

Where does it end though?

CALIN

What are you suggesting?

STEPHEN

I don't know, but this is madness.

Then Vlad appears, making Stephen balk.

VLAD

How did it go?

CALIN

Twelve villages destroyed. I got about five hundred more men.

VLAD

Excellent. Rest an hour and then we head south, see what these monkeys are doing. Stephen, I want you to take the army north. Get them to the mountains and rest.

Stephen nods, casting a weary look to Calin.

EXT. VILLAGE, WALLACHIA - DAY

The Ottoman army march under the scorching sun, the land BLACK AND SMOULDERING as far as the eye can see. Ahead of them lies another ruined village.

MASTIS

Halt.

The Ottoman army stop marching. Mohammed, Radu and General Mastis listen as a SCOUT gives his report from the village.

SCOUT

The village is deserted like all the rest. The well poisoned.

MASTIS

Sire, our water supplies run very low. It is my advice that we rest here and replenish supplies before advancing.

MOHAMMED

Fine, send a party to the Danube. While we wait, you will head north and formulate a plan to end this quickly. I am starting to lose patience.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - DAY

From a distance we see the massive Ottoman army at rest. TWO PARTIES depart the camp. The larger group heads south, the smaller goes north.

Vlad lowers his eyeglass and we see that it is from his point of view that we have seen this. He turns to Calin.

VLAD

You want the big one or the small one?

CALIN

The small.

Vlad grins and climbs down from his high perch revealing five thousand of his men laying in wait.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DUSK

The LARGE OTTOMAN PARTY hurriedly fill many containers with water, nervous in their work. One man stops working, peering off into the gloom. Then another man begins to stare.

Vlad and three thousand of his men have surrounded them.



VLAD

Drop your weapons and you will not be harmed.

(They drop their weapons)

You are now prisoners of Wallachia.

(To his men)

Take them to Tirgoviste.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - DAY

The sun is rising again and tensions are mounting. The SCOUTING PARTIES have yet to return, long overdue now. Then Radu sees something on the horizon through the rippling heat.

Moments later the DECAPITATED BODY OF MASTIS rides into camp. Radu slows the horse and begins undoing the straps, clearly effected by his brother's brutality. Mohammed strides over.

MOHAMMED

I hope you are satisfied.

RADU

None of this is my fault.

MOHAMMED

You had an opportunity to end this quietly and you did not take it.

All of this is your fault!

(Turning to his General)

We should already be moving General.

SADEEK, the SECOND GENERAL quickly turns to the men.

SADEEK

We're moving. Those of you that have water, share it with those that do not.

The last of the water is distributed amongst the soldiers, most do not get any.

EXT. WALLACHIA, BLACKENED PLANES - DAY

The Ottoman move slowly under the merciless afternoon sun, it has been ten hours since most have had water. The Carpathian mountains are now visible in the distance, green and lush but another full days march away. One man falters and falls.

Sadeek approaches the Sultan's carriage.

SADEEK

Sire, the men are exhausted and we desperately need water. I request that we make camp for the night and send a party to the mountains for supplies.

MOHAMMED

How do you know they will not be caught?

SADEEK

I do not, but we need water or the men will start dying.

Mohammed agrees with a curt nod.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

The Ottoman army rest under a bright moon. Even the watchman struggle to stay awake after marching all day with no water.

From the black, Vlad and Calin creep in through the rows of tents, a hundred of their hardest with them. Simultaneously the men each enter a tent, silently slitting the throats of the occupants. Not a sound emerges from any tent. The men regroup and move on to the next row.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - LATER

Vlad and Calin have made their way to the center of the camp where they covertly watch the SULTAN'S TENT.

VLAD

Mohammed is right inside that tent. We could finish this now.

CALIN

He's got fifty guards. Come on, we left them a nice surprise for the morning.

Calin retreats into the night. A moment longer and Vlad follows him out.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - DAWN

Mohammed is livid, watching as every tent is checked and bodies are piled for burial. Radu stands nearby, listening as Sadeek gives his report.

SADEEK

No one heard anything Sire, he's like a ghost. There are at least one thousand dead, some have disappeared completely.

MOHAMMED

And the water party? What happened to them?

SADEEK

No word Sire.

MOHAMMED

(Seething)

You must be thirsty, here have a drink of mine.

SADEEK

Thank you Sire, but I will drink when the soldiers drink.

MOHAMMED

I insist, General.

Mohammed hands Sadeek his canteen who nervously raises it to his lips. He is about to drink when Mohammed stabs him in the stomach.

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)

Imbecile!

(Turning to Radu)

Get my army ready to move.

RADU

Your men are ravished with dehydration. Another day of marching under these conditions could kill them. See sense Mohammed, it is no accident we find ourselves in this position.

MOHAMMED

We are thirty miles from the Carpathian mountains where we will rest and hydrate. From there Tirgoviste is a two day march and Vlad will have nowhere left to run.

A tense beat.

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)

I told you to get my army ready.

RADU

I am not your general.

Radu turns his back on Mohammed and helps bury the dead.

EXT. WALLACHIA, BLACKENED PLANES - DAY

The ravaged Ottoman army forge ahead as the sun taunts them with gentle morning rays. Ahead, the densely wooded CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS look like utopia.

EXT. CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, WALLACHIA - DAY

The Christian army rest on a clearing at the foot of the mountains. The clearing is surrounded on three sides by forest, a stream runs along one side. The perfect camp.

Cazan arrives, hurriedly looking for Vlad. He finds him in the center of the camp, talking with Stephen and Calin.

VLAD

Is everything alright?

CAZAN

The prison is filled to capacity, we can sustain no more men.

VLAD

We will send no more, we fight tonight.

CAZAN

(Shocked)

Then why take so many prisoners? I hoped you had decided to negotiate.

VLAD

The more men in our prisons, the less men we face on the battle field. When we have defeated them, I will sell them back to the Sultan to raise money to rebuild the country.

CAZAN

You are still outnumbered three-to-one Vlad. It is ludicrous to take them on in straight battle.

STEPHEN

I agree.

This hits Vlad like a thunderbolt.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

We should talk about negotiating, Vlad. With so many prisoners, we will decide the terms.

Vlad swallows his rage, pointing to Stephen's Dragon Pendant.

VLAD

Look at that pendant and remember why your father died. I gave you back your throne and I gave you back your freedom. Now I'm asking you to trust me.

STEPHEN

Of course I trust you, but we have to be realistic. There are still at least eighty thousand of them.

VLAD

Their morale is crippled. They have marched for days, sick with dehydration as we rested. We strike tonight, at this very spot. Kill Mohammed and the rest will flee.

Vlad looks to Calin who nods his unwavering support.

VLAD (CONT'D)

This was always the plan, Stephen.

CAZAN

How can you be sure they will come here?

CALIN

They need water and that stream is the only option for miles.

VLAD

We've come this far, brother. It's time to finish what they started. We can only do it with your help.

Vlad's eyes bore into Stephen until finally he nods his compliance.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Then it's settled.

Vlad walks Cazan back to his horse.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I need you back in Tirgoviste.

CAZAN

Are you sure you know what you're doing?

VLAD

This ends tonight.

Vlad slaps his back reassuringly, sending him on his way.

EXT. CLEARING, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DUSK

The clearing is now empty as the Ottoman rush in, running to the stream to drink. Slowly it transforms into another camp. Row after row of neat tents, the Sultan's Quarters at the center.

EXT. CLEARING, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Radu walks through the quiet camp unable to sleep. He sits with a group of NIGHT WATCHMEN who offer him hot tea.

A noise in the forest and one of the watchmen peers into the darkness. After a moment he shrugs, just an animal.

EXT. FOREST, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

The Christian army are assembled in the forest. Vlad stands with Calin and Stephen in a moment of silent unity. Stephen is clearly nervous.

VLAD

Just keep breathing and keep your sword moving. God is with you.

The men embrace before mounting their horses and setting off in separate directions, each leading off a third of the army.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Radu is dozing with the watchmen. A WHISTLING NOISE suddenly fills the air and they are on their feet. Then SLAM, one of the watchmen is knocked back down, an ARROW through his shoulder. Instantly the camp is in chaos.

From the NORTH FOREST, Vlad and his men scream down into the camp, slashing and hacking all in their path. The unprepared Ottoman are getting slaughtered.

EXT. WEST FOREST - NIGHT

Stephen sits before his MOLDAVIAN SOLDIERS watching Vlad's charge. His old friend the CAPTAIN steps forward.

CAPTAIN

It is time to move, Sir.

Stephen remains motionless, watching the massive Ottoman army beginning to galvanize.

STEPHEN

We're not moving, I will not  
sacrifice these men. I told Vlad  
but he would not see sense.

(Turning to the battle)

There is no hope of victory here.

The Captain is disgusted but he follows his king's order.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Vlad attempts to fight his way to the SULTAN'S QUARTERS but the Ottoman are rapidly organizing. He looks to the EAST and WEST, desperately needing his reinforcements.

Radu finishes arming himself amongst the Sultan's guard as Calin thunders in with SEVEN THOUSAND MORE MEN. They catch the Ottoman flank off guard causing utter devastation.

Radu surveys the situation, turning his attention to the WEST FOREST. Realizing that another strike will be coming from that direction, he turns to a nearby OFFICER.

RADU

Assemble as many men as you can and  
meet me at the west side of camp.

The Officer looks to the quiet forest to the west, understanding Radu's concern.

OFFICER

Yes Sir.

Back on Vlad, who has found his way to Calin. They have a real fight on their hands as more Ottoman rush in.

VLAD

Where the hell is Stephen?

CALIN

I don't know.

They both look over to the WEST FOREST where a group of Ottoman are already beginning to assemble.

VLAD  
He's leaving it too late.

EXT. WEST FOREST - NIGHT

Stephen watches as many more Ottoman line the clearing in front of them. Radu rides through the men, peering out into the gloomy forest. Stephen turns to his Captain.

STEPHEN  
Stay here.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Vlad and Calin are in the fight of their lives as the Ottoman start to take control. Again Vlad looks to the WEST and is nearly felled by what he sees. STEPHEN STANDS TALKING WITH RADU.

Blinded by fury, Vlad mounts a horse and gallops recklessly into the mass of Ottoman soldiers. With eyes locked on Stephen and Radu, he is oblivious to all other danger. And BAM, an arrow bites into his shoulder.

Radu is stunned to see his brother fall. Disorientated, Vlad struggles to his feet, clumsily defending himself against an Ottoman soldier. Then SLASH, Calin cuts the top of the soldier's head off before pulling Vlad up onto his horse.

CALIN  
Retreat! Retreat!

VLAD  
What are you doing?

CALIN  
Saving your life again. We cannot win now, it is time to retreat.

Calin gallops through the carnage and up into the forest, taking his king to safety. The rest of the army soon follow, disappearing as swiftly as they came.

EXT. FOREST, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Vlad and Calin regroup with their men in the forest. Vlad climbs onto his own horse.



VLAD

We need to get to Tirgoviste.

CALIN

You need to rest an hour and cauterize that wound.

VLAD

There is no time. We can still beat them but we need to be prepared.

The men are uneasy, looking to Calin. After a moment, he spurs his horse and they take off again through the forest.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAWN

Through early morning mist Stephen surveys the aftermath. Bodies litter the field, a murder of crows circle above. Mohammed stands with Radu and his THIRD GENERAL, KOSOVO.

KOSOVO

Sire, we must stay strong. I advise abandoning this campaign and moving to Moldavia. We can regroup and invade Hungary from there.

MOHAMMED

And what message do you think that would send to the rest of Europe? We finish this, Vlad will not get the better of me.

RADU

As long as you are willing to accept the responsibility of thirty thousand more deaths.

MOHAMMED

Ironic coming from you. Bury our men and get us ready to march.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad and his remaining ten thousand men arrive at Tirgoviste. Cazan rushes out to meet them.

CAZAN

What happened?

VLAD

The Ottoman are coming. Bring in the towns people and fortify the castle for siege.

CAZAN

We have no supplies, I have been feeding your prisoners.

VLAD

What choice do we have? They will be here by tomorrow. Fortify the castle.

Vlad heads inside.

CAZAN

What happened?

CALIN

It failed, Stephen betrayed us.

They share a moment, reflecting upon the magnitude of the problem they face.

CALIN (CONT'D)

I could never have imagined that it would all come to this. I should have stayed in the forest.

CAZAN

Perhaps it's time you returned. Get some rest, I will tend to the men.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

Vlad rushes in to find Eleanor on their balcony watching the commotion below, her pregnancy clearly visible now. She is shocked to see Vlad's state, ragged and bleeding.

ELEANOR

What happened? Are you shot again?

VLAD

It just pierced my shoulder.

Vlad embraces her tightly, breathing her in.

VLAD (CONT'D)

I have longed to have you in my arms again.

But Eleanor shrugs him off, confused and scared.

ELEANOR

What is happening Vlad? Why is the army here?

VLAD

The Ottoman are coming.

Eleanor's shock quickly turns to panic.

ELEANOR

When?

VLAD

Probably by tomorrow.

ELEANOR

We have to leave. We can disappear into the forest, they will never find us.

VLAD

If we run, we will be running forever. I gave my word to the people, I have to stay and finish this.

ELEANOR

If it were possible to stop them you would have done it already. You did everything that you could Vlad, now it is time to save your family.

VLAD

I cannot turn my back on Wallachia, Eleanor. But you should go, I will send Calin with you.

Eleanor is starting to cry, overcome with fear and frustration.

ELEANOR

Then I am staying too and I will die with you. Or we will raise our child together from the confines of a Turkish prison cell. I will not be your widow while you martyr yourself.

VLAD

I am not martyring myself. I can still beat him.

ELEANOR  
 How Vlad? How will you beat him  
 now?

Vlad has no answer. He covers his breaking heart with a cold demeanor.

VLAD  
 That is why you must leave.  
 Please understand that I cannot.

ELEANOR  
 I am not leaving without you! God  
 damn you Vlad! You swore that you  
 would not make the same mistakes as  
 your father but you are so much  
 worse. At least he knew when he was  
 beaten.

VLAD  
 I thought the point of being a  
 martyr was that you die so that  
 your beliefs are never beaten.

Eleanor slaps his face.

ELEANOR  
 And the point of being a husband is  
 that you would do anything to save  
 your wife and child.

Vlad nods, a dark resolve forming. He regards Eleanor for a long moment before barreling out of the room.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
 Where are you going?

VLAD  
 To save my wife and child.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

The courtyard is filled to capacity with soldiers resting and eating. Vlad explodes out of the castle and mounts his horse.

VLAD  
 (Barking at the men)  
 Now is the time for work not rest,  
 or come this time tomorrow you  
 shall rest an eternity. I want  
 twenty thousand young trees cut and  
 stripped by sunset.

CALIN

What's going on?

VLAD

What do you think? The Ottoman are coming, I think it would be prudent to be prepared for them.

With that Vlad about turns and gallops from the courtyard.

EXT. FOREST, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

The Ottoman make steady progress through the dense forest.

EXT. FOREST, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad's men work furiously cutting and stripping small trees, one end is sharpened to a point. They are making STAKES.

EXT. PRISON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad surveys the cells of OTTOMAN PRISONERS, all malnourished and filthy. He beckons for the PRISON GUARD to join him.

VLAD

I want these prisoners arranged into groups of one hundred and brought to the town common.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

On the town common, Vlad supervises as the stakes are laid out in rows. A hole is dug at the foot of each. Cazan arrives to witness Calin escorting the first group of prisoners down to the common.

EXT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DUSK

Eleanor anxiously paces when the silence is abruptly broken by a WAIL OF AGONY. The blood drains from her face as she goes to the balcony to investigate.

EXT TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Now we see the cause of the wail as Vlad assists in the IMPALEMENT of a Ottoman soldier. The process is brutal.

The greased tip of the stake is rammed into the man's chest, then several men hoist the stake vertical and slide it into the pre-dug hole. Gravity now takes hold as the weight of the man causes him to slide down the stake, impaling him.

The atmosphere is thick, a palpable sense amongst the men that they will never be forgiven for their participation in these atrocities. Vlad approaches Calin, both are literally covered in blood. Calin is unable to meet his eye.

EXT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DUSK

Night is falling. Eleanor watches the town common where hundreds of men writhe in terrible pain as they die. Haunted by the gruesome spectacle, she drops her robe. Tears well in her eyes as she touches her swollen belly.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry.

Vlad enters the courtyard below as Eleanor climbs up onto the balcony wall. He looks up, instantly panicked.

VLAD

What are you doing?

ELEANOR

Where could we go from here, Vlad?

Eleanor closes her eyes and allows herself to fall backwards. She drops gracefully for a split second before hitting the ground with a CRUNCH. Vlad rushes to her, cradling her broken body. The frightened townspeople look on in horror.

EXT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad carries Eleanor into their chambers, gently lowering her onto their bed. He brushes the hair from her face and holds her hand, laying his head on her lap.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Calin sits in the courtyard with his men, broken by the death of his sister and his participation in this massacre. The men quietly debate around him.

MAN

Half our soldiers have already left, I don't want to stay here to die. We did what we could.

MAN TWO

You're right. If that spectacle  
doesn't stop them, all of us are  
going to end up on those spikes.

Cazan joins the group and the men quiet down.

CAZAN

No need to stop, I agree. I think  
it is time to return to the forest.

Calin and Cazan hold each others gaze for a long time.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad has fallen asleep. Calin enters quietly, coming to the  
side of their bed. Lightly he kisses Eleanor, placing his  
small Crucifix in her hand.

CALIN

Goodbye beautiful girl.

A tear rolls from Calin's chin as Cazan appears at the  
doorway. Calin looks at his old friend. Knowing that Vlad  
would never come with them, he slips back out of the room.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAWN

In the morning light we see the full horror of Vlad's last  
stand. Eighteen thousand impaled Ottoman stretch from one end  
of the common to the other, row after row on progressively  
taller stakes. They create a human wall of defense. History  
will dub this 'THE FOREST OF THE IMPALED'.

Radu, Mohammed and what is left of the Ottoman army look on  
in acute horror. Mohammed drops to his knees in Prayer.

MOHAMMED

Forgive me Allah, my pride has  
blinded me. Forgive me for the  
lives of these men.

Mohammed turns to look at the faces of his soldiers who stand  
at the precipice of the forest. He sees them for the first  
time, flesh and blood. Exhausted and scared.

MOHAMMED (CONT'D)

You were right, the price of  
victory is too high. This is where  
it ends.

Radu looks at the carnage, slowly shaking his head.

RADU

No, if you stop now every life lost on this campaign will have been for nothing.

MOHAMMED

And I will live with that for the rest of my life. But I have lost half of my army, I can afford to lose no more. This is too much.

RADU

Which is why it can never happen again. You two will never stop fighting. There will be twenty more wars, thousands more will die.

MOHAMMED

But not today.

RADU

(Gesturing the dead)

Look at your men! You cannot let this happening again. Let me finish this.

Mohammed looks at the rows of dead soldiers, finally nodding his agreement.

MOHAMMED

You have twenty-four hours. No negotiations. By sunrise tomorrow I want to see a one of these stakes through Vlad's heart.

Radu looks sadly at the castle.

RADU

He will fall fighting to save the castle.

(Turning back to Mohammed)

When I am king, I rule Wallachia my way. We will have peace.

Mohammed musters a smile and nods.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad sleeps, at peace for a moment, then CRUNCH. A noise jolts him awake. Vlad keeps his eyes shut a moment longer before finally confronting Eleanor's body. When he does, he sees Calin's crucifix. Then again it comes, CRUNCH.



Vlad climbs unsteadily to his feet and crosses to the balcony. The courtyard below is EMPTY, everyone has left him. Vlad quietly absorbs his fate. Then again CRUNCH and the castle gates buckle.

EXT. OUTER CASTLE WALLS, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

The BATTERING RAM rolls one more time and the gates crack open. Ottoman soldiers rush into the courtyard ready to fight, only to find it empty.

Radu pushes through the men as a CLAPPING begins to echo off of the walls. All look up to see Vlad standing on his balcony railing. The Ottoman soldiers surge forward.

RADU

Halt! Stay where you are! No one enters the castle but me.

VLAD

I will meet you in the war room.

Vlad disappears back into the castle.

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Radu enters the war room apprehensively to find Vlad slumped on his thrown, his breathing laboured. Absentmindedly he twirls the Toledo Blade.

VLAD

You finally came home.

RADU

You gave me no choice. How could you do that to those men?

VLAD

An arrow, the sword, impalement, what difference does it make? They invaded my country and they got what they deserved.

RADU

No one deserves that. This whole war was for nothing. Here we are again, negotiating. Only now seventy thousand men have died and I can no longer save you.

VLAD

This is the way it always had to be, Radu. What is to be my fate?

RADU

Impalement at sunrise.

VLAD

Fitting. My wife is dead, can I rely on you to give her a proper burial?

RADU

I will see to it. You can stay here until dawn, I'll send in a priest.

Vlad smiles.

VLAD

Do you think God will forgive me for the things I've done?

RADU

I ask myself the same question.

Radu looks sadly at his brother before slowly turning away. As he reaches the door, Vlad calls after him.

VLAD

I love you Radu, in spite of everything.

And he tosses the Toledo Blade to his brother.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Remember who you are, this country needs you now.

RADU

I know what this country needs.

They regard each other a moment longer before Radu forces himself to leave. We stay on Vlad, sitting injured and alone.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAWN

The sky is red as the sun rises over Wallachia. Fires roar on the town common, warming the Ottoman soldiers who quietly bury their dead.

All work stops as Vlad is led down to the common, he once again wears his FATHER'S CRUCIFIX.

Soldiers heckle and spit on him as he passes. Radu is devastated watching his brother walk to his death. He rushes to Mohammed.

RADU

I beg you to spare him, for me.

MOHAMMED

You know I cannot do that.

RADU

Let him rot in a prison for the rest of his life, that would be worse for him anyway. Please Mohammed, I cannot watch him die.

MOHAMMED

Then do not watch, but my men demand this.

RADU

You care not what your men want. Show the world that you are the better man. Do not stoop to his level. Prove you are the better man, Mohammed.

Mohammed looks at the pain and desperation in his friend's face, likes the idea of being the better man.

MOHAMMED

If he will bow to me, he can spend the rest of his life in prison.

Radu nods his thanks and rushes over to Vlad. A stake has been laid out in front of him and the whole army has gathered around, eager to watch the execution.

RADU

Mohammed will spare you if you bow to him.

VLAD

That would erase everything that I have done.

RADU

Nothing could erase that. You did everything that you could. Take solace in that and live out the rest of your life in peace.

Vlad is touched by his brother's grief but shakes his head.

VLAD

I cannot do that Radu.

Mohammed enters the circle and all bow, all but Vlad. General Kosovo approaches.

KOSOVO

The Sultan is willing to spare your life if you will swear your alliance to the Empire and bow to him now.

The Ottoman soldiers boo and holler their objections as Stephen pushes his way through the crowd. Vlad shakes his head, refusing to bow.

RADU

Please Vlad.

STEPHEN

For God's sake Vlad, just bow.

Seeing Stephen oddly strengthens Vlad's resolve. He touches his brother's face. Then instead of bowing, Vlad raises his arms and puts back his head, making the sign of the cross.

Mohammed nods to Kosovo and the STAKE IS RAMMED INTO VLAD'S CHEST. The stake is then hoisted vertical and slid into its hole. The Ottoman soldiers cheer.

We stay on Radu as he walks away from the crowd. He brushes the tears from his face, looking up to the bright red sky.

As we fade to Black, script runs;

That night Vlad's body disappeared, his final resting place is still unknown.

Radu finally brought peace to Wallachia. He negotiated the first treaty between the Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. The Ottoman never advanced any further into Europe.

Vlad would be remembered forever. By some, as the warrior king who led the last crusade. But by most, as the blood sucking legend that his life inspired.

DRACULA