

DRACULA YEAR ZERO

by

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&

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WGA Registered

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. TRANSYLVANIAN COUNTRYSIDE - CARPATHIAN RANGE - DAY 1

Ten armed men run through the white veins of a birch forest.

THE CASTLE GUARD

Tracking quarry under the shadowed canopy of trees...

SUPERTITLE: Transylvania, 1462 A.D.

Snatches of their LEADER as he races through shafts of sunlight... Jet-black hair... Sweat on his brow... Clouds of breath in the crisp air...

On his hip, a sword in scabbard... On his hand, a SILVER SIGNET RING bearing the symbol of a dragon...

CLOSE ON A SILVER COIN, glinting in the dirt.

The Leader STOPS to examine it. The coin's stamped with a king's strong profile. Though HIS FACE REMAINS IN SHADOW, his silhouette is the same as on the coin.

PRINCE VLAD DRACULA

Ruler of Transylvania. 30s. A soldier's frame. He tosses the coin to

DIMITRU

30s, big as a bear. He's a Boyar, member of the landed gentry. Lusty, lovable, ferocious in a fight. And Vlad's closest friend.

DIMITRU

(it doesn't add up)

Gypsies snatch coin purses. They don't steal a year's worth of taxes from your Royal Guard...

VLAD

They did today.

Vlad KEEPS MOVING, driven. Dimitru at his side, plus steadfast CAPTAIN PETRU and the rest of Vlad's Castle Guard.

FOLLOWING the Gypsies' trail through dense, oppressive forest... It glistens from a rainstorm that threatens to return. As they push INTO A CLEARING...

Is revealed. It rises above the trees like an angry god, its peak jagged as a crown of fangs. Bruise-yellow STORM CLOUDS hover strangely over the peak.

DIMITRU
(with dread)
They're headed to Broken-Tooth.

Vlad's men HALT, giving in to their fears. Vlad REMAINS IN SHADOW. A cipher. Dimitru nervously grips a CHARM inscribed with ancient signs:

VLAD
What is that?

DIMITRU
Wards off evil.

VLAD
Where did you get it?

DIMITRU
(sheepish)
Bought it off a Gypsy. Real silver.

Vlad dismissively examines the charm.

VLAD
You were robbed.

Dimitru snatches it back, irritated.

DIMITRU
(off the mountain)
Men who travel here past sunset don't come back.

VLAD
I know all the stories. I just think they're horseshit.
(off the charm)
And that's tin.

Poor Dimitru regards his charm with buyer's remorse...

DIMITRU
Your heart's Transylvanian, but you didn't grow up here. This place is not like other places.

2 CONTINUED:

2

VLAD
 (challenging his men)
 I need the money back now.

3 EXT. BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

3

Alongside a surging RIVER, GYPSIES pull the stolen WAGON loaded with silver. They're tough outsiders, garbed in aggressive patterns.

SHKELGIM

Senses something, the way a long-lived rabbit feels the shadow of a hawk... He's the Gypsy Chief. Crafty. Face weathered by wind and sun.

He scans the surrounding forest... The other Gypsies mutter just as nervously here as the Castle Guard...

SHKELGIM
 (to his Men)
 Hurry, now.

But as Shkelgim's eyes dart to Broken-Tooth's bleak crown, perhaps it's not his pursuers he fears...

VLAD

Steps from the woods INTO THE LIGHT. Finally we see his face clearly. A man not to be crossed this day.

VLAD
 Stop.

Shkelgim instead whips more speed from the horses, heaving the wagon closer to the mountain...

Gypsies hang back at Shkelgim's SHOUTED ORDER, spreading out to stop their pursuers. Defiantly unsheathing swords...

VLAD (cont'd)
 Alright then.

Vlad and his men throw themselves at the Gypsies.

Three BOLD GYPSIES pin Vlad between them. Vlad meets their blades, parrying fast.

Vlad gets in close, throws punches and elbows. A nose shatters, a jaw breaks. Two Bold Gypsies fall...

The Third THRUSTS at Vlad --

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

Vlad twists. The sword skims his side. Vlad catches the Gypsy's arm and WRENCHES it.

Dimitru's sword-stroke misses a Gypsy, hits a tree instead and is STUCK FAST in the wood. FOUR GYPSIES surround Vlad's unarmed friend, poised to kill...

No time to think: Vlad TOSSES Dimitru his own SWORD. Now armed, Dimitru barrels into his attackers...

Vlad targets the wagon across the sea of clamoring steel:

Shkelgim surprisingly reins the fleeing wagon to a STOP. CUTS the horses free. Throws his weight against the wagon...

DIMITRU

What in God's name is he doing?

Vlad realizes the Gypsies are just stalling them...

Shkelgim is trying to roll the wagon down the embankment... and dump the silver in the river.

VLAD

Son of a whore!

Shkelgim sees Vlad coming full bore. Gives one last shove to get the wagon WHEELS TURNING...

Shkelgim draws a DAGGER on Vlad. Vlad grabs Shkelgim's wrist and forces the blade IN THE WHEEL'S SPOKES to stop it --

The blade SNAPS as the wagon lumbers TOWARD THE RIVER'S EDGE.

Vlad throws Shkelgim to the dirt, gets a hand on the wagon --

The wagon's weight drags Vlad... He digs in his heels... Slows it, but the front wheels slip OFF THE EDGE OF THE EMBANKMENT... The wagon teeters precariously...

Veins popping, Vlad heaves back with all his might. Stops the wagon in time, staving off disaster.

The beaten Gypsies surrender. Vlad grabs Shkelgim's collar.

VLAD (cont'd)

Are you insane?

SHKELGIM

I had a dream. This is what I must do.

(CONTINUED)

VLAD
Dump my taxes in the water?

SHKELGIM
Dam the river with silver. To
prevent what is to come.

DIMITRU
(worried)
What is to come?

SHKELGIM
Dead men who rise from their graves
at night... and hunt til dawn
compels them back.

VLAD
(orders his men)
Bind him.

SHKELGIM
I dreamt of a foolish man, who will
free this evil from the mountain
and poison all the earth --

Vlad presses the broken knife to Shkelgim's throat.

VLAD
You put my kingdom at risk for
this?

SHKELGIM
If you're going to kill me, I'd
like a moment to pray.

VLAD
The punishment for stealing is
twenty lashes.

Vlad lowers the knife. Dimitru begins BINDING Shkelgim...

Shkelgim INTONES threatening words in an ancient tongue...

Dimitru and Vlad's men back away, petrified it might be some
Gypsy curse...

Vlad PUNCHES Shkelgim across the jaw. Glares at his men.
Point made, he finishes tying Shkelgim's binds himself.

VLAD (cont'd)
Make it nineteen lashes.

Vlad selects a thin branch with some bend to it. Cuts it and prunes it into a wicked-looking switch. Vlad's men rip open the back of Shkelgim's garments to expose the skin.

Vlad brings the switch down on Shkelgim's back, raising a raw red stripe. The Gypsy CRIES OUT in pain.

VLAD (cont'd)

Eighteen.

Vlad WHIPS Shkelgim again and again. As Vlad metes out his justice, the SUN SETS...

VLAD (cont'd)

(finishes, to Shkelgim)

Now go home.

SHKELGIM

Please, Prince. You don't know what you're doing. Only the purity of silver can hurt him. Nothing unclean can touch it.

Shade eclipses the mountain...

Vlad sees a vague SHADOW across the river... Vlad squints: another Gypsy? Then it's gone.

VLAD

(calling out)

You --

DIMITRU

(scared, to Vlad)

Don't.

Vlad ignores him. CROSSES THE RIVER, bounding from rock to rock...

AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN, Vlad cranes around... searching in the failing light... He can't hear anything over the white-noise RUSH of the river...

Vlad's boot kicks something... A HELMET? He recognizes the finely wrought Arabic inlay.

TURKISH WEAPONS are scattered everywhere. A battalion's worth of ARMOR peeled off and shredded. Evidence of total massacre.

But there are no bodies.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (4)

Vlad RETURNS. Tosses the helmet to Dimitru. There's a HOLE in it, the size of a man's screaming mouth. Looks bitten straight through.

VLAD
Turkish scouts. What were they doing here?

DIMITRU
(crossing himself)
They didn't know the stories.

Dimitru fearfully regards the sky...

DIMITRU (cont'd)
It's getting dark.

A MIST slips down from Broken-Tooth on a cold wind. This mist has an odd red tint...

It exhales across the river, engulfing them all... Vlad touches the moisture left on his face. It's BLOOD RED.

Vlad finds this odd -- his men think it terrifying, wiping the red sheen from their skin in horror.

SHKELGIM
(a final warning)
All the swords in your kingdom could not stop him.

Vlad turns to his jittery men:

VLAD
We got what we came for.

SHKELGIM
(head bowed)
Mother-of-us-all, forgive me. I failed.

Vlad's boot clinks the helmet. He looks down at the gnawed bite in its Turkish steel. Wondering, just for a moment, if the stories could be true.

The dusky face of Broken-Tooth DISSOLVES into...

4 EXT. CASTLE DRACULA - CITY OF TIRGOVISTE - DAY

4

A great stone slab of unadorned defense. Reflected in a pond, it quavers like a dream...

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

Easter Morning sun casts Vlad's castle in gold. It towers over the capital city of TIRGOVISTE, tucked against the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. The city is a jumble of angled roofs punctuated by church steeples.

5 INT. BEDROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

5

Vlad ENTERS his room, brooding...

MIRENA

Sits up in bed. Vlad's wife, the Princess. Early 20s, raven hair, a tiny IVORY CRUCIFIX around her neck. Usually a bright, brassy spirit... right now she's tired. She didn't sleep either.

MIRENA

I can always tell when the Turk tax collectors are due. There's an empty place in bed.

VLAD

I'm usually not chasing down Gypsy thieves.

MIRENA

You got the silver back?

VLAD

(nods, then)
And if I hadn't?

Lost in memories that give him no peace, he peels off his clothes. Vlad's body is etched with scrapes from the Gypsies... and deeper, older battle scars.

MIRENA

You're home. For almost as many years now as you were with them.

Vlad flops back on the bed, exhausted. Mirena pulls him right back up...

MIRENA (cont'd)

We have to get dressed. It may be tax day in Turkey, but here it's still Easter.

(off Vlad's look)

Easter? Remember? When our Lord Christ rose from the dead?

With a roguish glint, Vlad scoops Mirena in his arms.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

VLAD

How long do you need?

Vlad and Mirena embrace in long, lingering kisses...

6 INT. BEDROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - LATER

6

Mirena dresses quickly, donning the elaborate raiment the day requires... Smiling and flushed...

Vlad's already decked in his princely attire. He ENTERS the adjacent room...

7 INT. INGERAS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

7

A matronly GOVERNESS dresses

INGERAS

Vlad and Mirena's six year-old son (pronounced "In-je-rash"). He chafes against being dressed like a doll. A losing battle he's been unwilling to concede for years.

INGERAS

(to his Governess)

I can do it, you know.

VLAD

I know.

The Governess bows and withdraws so Vlad can finish buttoning his son's jacket himself.

INGERAS

(to Vlad)

It's not any better if you do it.

VLAD

Do you know what the word
"responsibility" means?

INGERAS

Wearing itchy clothes.

VLAD

Doing things you don't want because
it's important.

Vlad combs a knot out of Ingeras' hair.

INGERAS

I dreamed I had a pie. And then I
ate my dream. Ow --

(CONTINUED)

VLAD

Was it good?

INGERAS

Very good.

VLAD

Did you save a piece for me?

INGERAS

(cheerily)

No.

Buttoned in, Ingeras pulls at his tight collar. Vlad similarly stretches shoulders constrained by his own fine jacket. United in their discomfort.

VLAD

(a twinkle in his eye)

Let's leave and go riding. Skip the whole feast.

Ingeras judiciously weighs this option... He wants to be a good Prince, like the father he idolizes.

INGERAS

I think we should go to the feast.

VLAD

Later then?

Vlad offers his hand for Ingeras to take...

INGERAS

Later.

It's a deal. Ingeras' small hand fits comfortably into his father's. And we see this warrior undone by love for his son.

Vlad sits on his throne. Framed by muscular architecture of polished BLACK LIMESTONE.

A PEASANT SHEPHERD and his 15 year old son MIHAI kneel before Vlad.

PEASANT SHEPHERD

I tried to fight them off... but the wolves ate all my flock. Now I'm afraid I can't put enough food on our table.

VLAD
 (thinks for a moment)
 My advisor could use a good valet.

CAZAN

Nods graciously. 50s, the Prince's advisor, wise and direct. Afflicted with a withered hand and club foot, he relies on a CANE. Cazan loves Vlad like a son, a love Vlad returns. But ultimately Cazan is iron-bound by his duty to Transylvania.

PEASANT SHEPHERD
 Thank you, Prince.

The Peasant Shepherd hugs his son and is escorted OUT.

CAZAN
 That is the fifth valet you've hired for me today.

VLAD
 You'll have very shiny boots.

CAZAN
 Your father made me shine my own.

VLAD
 I'm not him.

A PRIEST and a THIEF in chains are brought in. The Priest is well-fed in rich satin, the Thief in rags.

PRIEST
 Prince, God's blessings on you.
 Our new church is magnificent.

Vlad gestures for him to continue.

PRIEST (cont'd)
 (points at the thief)
 He stole from the altar.

The Priest dramatically presents a CHALICE as evidence. Vlad is unmoved.

VLAD
 The punishment for stealing a man's property is twenty lashes.

PRIEST
 (persisting)
 But... he did not steal from a man.
 He stole from God.

(CONTINUED)

VLAD

God will get his own chance to judge him.

PRIEST

He desecrated our church. This man deserves to die.

VLAD

You may have his life... but you have to take it yourself.

PRIEST

Me?

Vlad rises, drawing a DAGGER from his belt. He presses the blade in the hands of the flustered Priest.

VLAD

(points at the Thief)
Strike fast here, in the heart. Or cut him in the gut if you want him to linger.

The Priest looks at the dagger... and feels sick.

VLAD (cont'd)

Or he could be lashed twenty times.

Rattled, the Priest nods, accepting Vlad's sentence. The Priest and Thief are LED AWAY...

Vlad sees Cazan appraising him, amused...

VLAD (cont'd)

What?

CAZAN

You could have just said no.

VLAD

I'm hungry. Let's eat.

Cazan FOLLOWS Vlad out an open archway into

A GREAT HALL

Wrapped with a starkly painted row of towering PORTRAITS. They are Vlad's ancestors, the line of Transylvanian Princes.

Today the hall is filled with the noisy hum of drinking and revelry. Transylvanian CITIZENS sit at long tables. Some rich, some humble, all enjoying a FEAST.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SNOWFLAKES float down, alighting on the obsidian walls, melting to shiny droplets... We might think this odd. Aren't we indoors?

The roof has been taken off the throne room. It's open to the slate-gray spring sky. Everyone exposed to heaven as equals.

The Prince's arrival fills the hall with excited buzz...

Vlad glad-hands a row of RELIGIOUS LEADERS in velvet robes... then faces a starkly different sort of Man of God:

BROTHER LUCIAN

Bows in gratitude. 50s, a monk wearing a simple cossack, in contrast to the Archbishop's pomp. His body bent under the weight of his knowledge, starved in the quest for it.

VLAD (cont'd)

Lucian. The construction went well?

BROTHER LUCIAN

Your generosity has been without peer. Truly God will welcome you into Heaven for all of the homes you've built for Him on earth.

Vlad earnestly clasps Brother Lucian's hand.

VLAD

That's not why I'm doing it.

MIRENA

Stands in a circle of LADIES engaged in polite small talk, Ingeras at the center.

From Ingeras' point of view, he's surrounded by a gaggle of overstuffed hens, enduring an onslaught of pinched cheeks and oohs and ahhs and a chorus of My-how-he's-grown-into-a-spitting-image-of-his-father.

Mirena catches sight of Vlad working the room with effortless skill...

He shares a toast of something brackish and strong with some SOLDIERS who'd die for him... Listens intently to the concerns of CRAFTSMEN, practitioners of honest professions...

(CONTINUED)

MIRENA

(interrupts Vlad, low)

The toads are pouting on their log.

She nudges Vlad toward

THE BOYARS

The wealthy landowners of the ruling class, each draped in tailored furs. Eating at their own table. Frowning.

ON VLAD. This is the part of the job he least enjoys.

AT THE BOYARS' TABLE, an IRRITATED BOYAR brushes snow from his plate of lamb.

IRRITATED BOYAR

(grumbling)

What was wrong with the roof?

Doesn't he know spring in

Tirgoviste is colder than winter?

SIMION "THE WISE"

Answers. 50s, oily charm. The richest and highest ranking Boyar.

SIMION "THE WISE"

It's to make us feel like peasants.

Vlad glides up. Puts on the fraternal airs of the nobility. One of the boys.

VLAD

No. It makes *them* feel like *you*.

Boyars nod amongst themselves, now appreciating his strategy... Except Simion, smiling thinly, the only one not buying Vlad's act. But there's no advantage to making waves.

Instead, Simion raises his cup and bows with a flourish.

SIMION "THE WISE"

(to the whole room)

To ten years of peace and prosperity since our Prince came back to us. To twenty more, each one richer than the last.

(to Ingeras)

And above all, to the young Prince.

Ingeras' cheeks burn under everyone's gaze. Hoping he's making a suitably princely expression.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (5)

8

Everyone raises their cups in resounding support of Vlad. All except Dimitru, who snores through the toast. Head tilted back, drunk.

Vlad finds his seat next to Mirena.

The Passion Play BEGINS. A small children's CHOIR sings. ACTORS portray Christ's death and resurrection.

Ingeras is seated in front of his parents. He properly observes the proceedings with stoic willpower.

Mirena notes that it's Vlad who's fussing in his chair.

MIRENA

(leaning into Vlad's ear)
You might take a lesson from your son and learn to sit still.

VLAD

(off the Passion Play)
I know how it ends.
(beat, suspicious)
What did you bribe him with?

MIRENA

It gives him great joy to obey his Queen. You should try it.

VLAD

Toy horse?

MIRENA

(admitting)
A snake. A real one.

Vlad's impressed.

VLAD

You're less squeamish than I thought...

MIRENA

I'm the most proper lady you'll ever know.

Vlad LAUGHS, kisses her on the forehead...

9 A DOZEN TURKISH SOLDIERS

9

March into the Hall as if they owned the place. The Turks wear turbans. Uniforms colored in brilliant hues.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

The crowd MURMURS. The Castle Guards are uneasy...

Vlad shares a fraught look with Mirena. Ingeras isn't used to seeing his father nervous like this -- it puts the boy on edge...

HAMZA BEY

Approaches Vlad. Emissary of the Turks. A delicate bearing, flush with arrogance. He speaks in *SUBTITLED TURKISH*, designated by italics:

HAMZA BEY

(in Turkish)

*Is there a single fly in your
country that does not bite?*

Vlad chooses to answer Hamza Bey in English:

VLAD

I hope your journey was safe.

HAMZA BEY

(in English)

Sultan Mehmed the Second offers his salutations to you and your son.

Vlad does his best to mask his anxiety.

VLAD

Thank him for his sentiment.

Hamza Bey's SUBORDINATE finishes counting the silver, nods.

VLAD (cont'd)

Now take it and leave.

But Hamza Bey does not leave. Instead, he unfolds a MAP...

HAMZA BEY

Greater tribute is required.

Red dots indicate a patchwork of sites across Transylvania.

HAMZA BEY (cont'd)

Our soldiers will construct a chain of aviaries for the Sultan's carrier pigeons.

Cazan shoots a shocked look at Vlad.

CAZAN

Carrier pigeons...

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD

The fastest way for troops to communicate is by air.

Vlad knew this day would come.

VLAD (cont'd)

Mehmed is invading Europe.

HAMZA BEY

The Danube is a road, and it flows past your door. It brought Caesar and Charlemagne, Khan and Alexander. It is your fate to be a pebble on the road of conquerors. But the Sultan need not concern himself with a pebble if it stays out of his boot.

VLAD

Mehmed has no enemies here.

HAMZA BEY

Did you think we would not notice a battalion of our scouts missing for days?

Hamza Bey points to Broken-Tooth on the map. Vlad steadies himself.

VLAD

I didn't kill them.

Hamza Bey doesn't bother arguing the point.

HAMZA BEY

There is one last thing...
(announcing to the crowd)
The Sultan requires one thousand boys to join his Janissary Corps.

VLAD

(blindsided)
Janissaries? You abandoned this practice years ago.

HAMZA BEY

The Sultan needs soldiers.

A JANISSARY stalks through the feast, wearing a distinctive uniform that sets him apart from the Turks...

BRIGHT-EYES

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (3)

Appraises BOYS with a baby-blue stare that could pierce lead. Blond and powerful, himself plucked as a child from a Christian land. Raised to be a ruthless warrior, loyal only to the Sultan.

HAMZA BEY (cont'd)

Those age fifteen will fight in Hungary. Those from ten to fourteen will be made ready for the siege on Vienna.

A fire rages inside Vlad...

HAMZA BEY (cont'd)

I do not expect disobedience. Did not your own father give you up without a fight?

VLAD

I was no Janissary. I was a royal hostage.

HAMZA BEY

You may have been raised under the Sultan's roof, but you fought for us just the same.

This is news to Ingeras... His father grew up with these people?

Bright-Eyes inspects a RED-HAIRED BOY like livestock...

BRIGHT-EYES

Soft, but they will do.

The BOY'S FATHER grabs Bright-Eyes' sleeve --

Bright-Eyes KILLS the Boy's Father with a single stroke of his scimitar.

Vlad's people cower. Dimitru and the Castle Guard watch helplessly. No one dares make a move against the Turks.

Bright-Eyes takes the Red-Haired Boy's arm.

BRIGHT-EYES (cont'd)

(to Hamza Bey)

I should take him now. This boy needs a father.

Vlad catches the boy's scared eyes...

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (4)

9

Vlad moves the Red-Haired Boy safely behind him and into the arms of a VILLAGE ELDER.

Bright-Eyes drops his hand to his scimitar...

Vlad speaks to Bright-Eyes in flawless *TURKISH*:

VLAD
You know who I am.

Bright-Eyes hesitates. He knows.

HAMZA BEY
*You are losing your accent, Prince.
You almost sound Transylvanian.*

Hamza Bey waves off Bright-Eyes, diffusing the situation.

HAMZA BEY (cont'd)
A thousand boys in two weeks.

Vlad stiffens as if a blade were pressed to his throat...

HAMZA BEY (cont'd)
You do not want the Sultan
disappointed upon his arrival.

The Turks LEAVE. Shaken Peasants embrace their sons...
Mirena is stricken...

Vlad looks as if he's standing on a gallows... Cazan puts a hand on his shoulder.

CAZAN
Listen to me. Courage. Anger.
Love. Especially love... None of
these matter for a prince. They
will even lead him to ruin. All
that matters is his duty to his
people.

Vlad's eyes linger on his FATHER'S PORTRAIT...

VLAD
Is that how you advised my father?

10 INT. INGERAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

10

Vlad sits on the edge of Ingeras' bed.

INGERAS
We never went riding, you know.

(CONTINUED)

VLAD
We'll go tomorrow.

Ingeras is troubled. He has something on his mind.

INGERAS
You went to live with the Turks?

VLAD
Yes.
(choosing his words)
When two men fight, sometimes to
make peace, the loser will give
something to the winner. Something
they think is valuable.

INGERAS
How old were you?

VLAD
A little younger than you.

INGERAS
Were you there a long time?

VLAD
When I came back I thought I was a
man. I wasn't. I had to meet your
mother for that.

INGERAS
Were you scared?

VLAD
(after a beat)
I wanted to make my father proud.

Ingeras tries to process this...

INGERAS
Are you proud of me?

Vlad can see fear in his son's eyes.

VLAD
(reassuring)
That was another time. You don't
have anything to worry about.

Vlad kisses him on the forehead and blows out the candle.

11 INT. CHAPEL - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

11

Still of the night. Icons of saints surround the crucified Christ from floor to ceiling...

Mirena prays alone, a scarf covering her head. There are no pews; in the Eastern Orthodox tradition one stands before God.

Vlad finds her here.

MIRENA

Do you know what you're going to do?

VLAD

(after a beat)

No.

MIRENA

You would never give our son to the Sultan.

VLAD

No.

MIRENA

Can you let him take the others?

VLAD

If I don't he'll kill a hundred for every one I save.

(tormented)

But you know what the Turks will train those boys to do...

Vlad struggles to keep his memories bottled up.

MIRENA

I know what you've told me.

Mirena traces her fingers along Vlad's back, across the scars hidden beneath.

VLAD

How can you love me?

MIRENA

I know your heart.

Mirena searches for some answer...

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

MIRENA (cont'd)

You grew up with Mehmed...

VLAD

There was a time he and I were like brothers.

MIRENA

Ask the Sultan to show mercy.

VLAD

He has no use for mercy.

MIRENA

Then ask God.

Vlad snorts.

MIRENA (cont'd)

(persisting)

Some questions can't be answered by men. Or even clever wives. Some questions are beyond us.

VLAD

I didn't know my father was giving me to the Turks until they stepped off their boat. I hid in a chapel by the river and prayed for six hours before they dragged me away.

Vlad extinguishes a candle with his thumb and forefinger.

VLAD (cont'd)

What has God ever done for me?

MIRENA

He gave you a son.

Mirena EXITS, leaving Vlad alone.

Vlad stands before God without an ounce of humility. Lowers his eyes to the crucifix with its bloody, tormented Christ.

VLAD

(to the Christ icon)

You have my sympathies.

But as Vlad focuses on the Christ Icon... he sees his face reflected in the gold foil circle haloing the crown of thorns.

Vlad realizes he found his answer after all.

12 INT. BEDROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

12

Mirena helps Vlad strap on his BREASTPLATE.

MIRENA

What if you don't come back?

VLAD

(wiping away her tears)

I will.

Vlad holds her face in his hands. Memorizing the line of her chin, the curve of her lips. Fixing her in his mind forever.

Ingeras ENTERS. Sees armored Vlad from behind. For a second, he's taken aback.

VLAD (cont'd)

(to Ingeras)

It's me. It's armor.

MIRENA

He's just never seen you in it before.

Ingeras thinks he knows why this is happening. That it's his fault...

INGERAS

Are you leaving because of me?

Vlad hugs his son. Using every ounce of will to contain his emotion.

VLAD

I need you to look after your mother.

13 EXT. SULTAN'S TENT - DANUBE RIVER - DAY

13

Vlad ARRIVES at the SULTAN'S TENT on the DANUBE SHORE, accompanied by Dimitru, Cazan and a few of his Castle Guards.

The canvas peaks of the Sultan's Tent mimic Turkish minarets. Gilded leather shines like jewels.

IN THE FAR DISTANCE, the river has sprouted a hazy forest of crimson and turquoise. They're SAILS atop masts, rippling in the wind...

Mehmed's mighty FLEET is coming. Countless warships weighted with legions.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

Awe reverberates through Vlad's men.

DIMITRU

The whole world will be Turk.

GENERAL OMER

Approaches Vlad. 60s. Supreme Commander of all Mehmed's armies. Shrewd and unflinching, he fears nothing but the wrath of God. The one man whose counsel the Sultan trusts.

GENERAL OMER

(sizing up Vlad)

Kaziglu Bey. You are a man full grown.

VLAD

And you, Omer, are a man grown old.

General Omer cracks a thin smile.

GENERAL OMER

He is eager to see you. It is all he has been talking about for days.

Vlad, Cazan and Dimitru are escorted to the Tent...

Mehmed's GENERALS murmur amongst themselves as they eye Vlad with hard-won respect: *Kaziglu Bey... Kaziglu Bey...*

GUARDS part fabric doors for them to ENTER...

DIMITRU

(to Vlad)

What are they saying? "Kaziglu Bey?"

14 INT. SULTAN'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

14

SULTAN MEHMED THE SECOND

Sits before them, in a sumptuously embroidered interior. Clad in golden armor. Vlad's age. Radiating power.

MEHMED

*Do your own people not know you?
Have you not told them your name?*

VLAD

I left that name behind.

(CONTINUED)

MEHMED

*Well, perhaps like many things
Turk, it is restless and refuses to
stay put.*

(gestures to a table)

*Sit. We will drink coffee together
as we did when we were boys.*

Mehmed pours thick Turkish coffee. Vlad takes a sip.

VLAD

*Just as it should be. Black as
hell, strong as death...*

MEHMED

(finishes the proverb in
English)

And sweet as love.

VLAD

I think your prophet himself once
said, blessed be he who conquers
Constantinople. A prize sought for
a thousand years -- and you brought
down its walls in fifty four days.

Mehmed nods graciously at the compliment.

MEHMED

Europe is child's play compared to
it. Those foolish kings will still
be plotting against one another
while I raise my flag over their
heads.

(beat)

I miss the time we spent arguing
whether such a thing were possible.

VLAD

All I miss from my time with you is
the coffee.

Mehmed smiles, understanding...

MEHMED

My father's palace was cruel for a
young boy alone, far from home.
But soon you talked like us.
Dreamed like us. Fought like us.
And fight, that you did better than
most...

(sips his coffee)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

MEHMED (cont'd)

So I am owed one thousand boys.
Why have I not seen them?

VLAD

Because you can't have them.

Mehmed raises a curious eyebrow...

Vlad takes a knee before the Sultan and offers his sword.

VLAD (cont'd)

I'm worth a thousand boys. I'll go
with you to Europe. I'll fight as
your servant.

(beat)

Just leave my people be.

Mehmed savors Vlad's offer. Mehmed's Generals REMARK
excitedly... Vlad looks as if he's relinquished his soul.

MEHMED

Those kings would tremble if they
knew.

(turns to Dimitru)

Do you want to know why we call
your prince Kaziglu Bey?

Vlad goes rigid.

MEHMED (cont'd)

My father sent young Vlad to serve
his Vizier in Greece. Unruly
Greece. It was an insult to the
Vizier -- this Transylvanian pup
come to help him. So the Vizier
gave him a handful of soldiers and
sent him to the fiercest village.
With orders to kill every man,
woman and child. It was an
impossible task. A death sentence.

Mehmed watches Vlad squirm at the telling of the tale.

MEHMED (cont'd)

But the Transylvanian pup did not
die. He impaled them all, as is
the Turkish way. Eight hundred, so
they say. And I believe it.

(his favorite part)

Only young Vlad believed this
punishment alone would solve
nothing. So he impaled the Vizier
as well.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (3)

MEHMED (cont'd)

He sent word to all the villages:
you have had your blood for blood.
Now bow to the Sultan and live in
peace. And they did.

(after a beat, to Dimitru)

Kaziglu Bey. It means "Lord
Impaler."

Dimitru is thunderstruck. Cazan knew.

MEHMED (cont'd)

They were women and children. You
found a way to do what we could
not.

VLAD

(impatient)

Then accept my offer.

MEHMED

When we were boys, I longed for the
day you would fight at my side.

(leaning back)

But now I am Sultan. What need
have I for one more soldier?

I count my soldiers by armies. My
enemies by nations. And you not at
all.

VLAD

(rising apprehension)

You know I'm more than a soldier --

Mehmed scoffs at the audacity.

MEHMED

I will have that thousand boys.
And one more.

Vlad feels the strength drain from his bones as General Omer
unrolls a PARCHMENT, detailing the terms.

MEHMED (cont'd)

Your son will be raised under my
roof, just as you were raised under
the roof of my father.

Mehmed gestures to

GENERAL ISMAIL

Young, with a cruel mouth and dead eyes. Eager for his
Sultan's approval.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (4)

MEHMED (cont'd)

(to Vlad)

You will stay on your throne, but
General Ismail will remain. To see
my wishes fulfilled.

Mehmed cuts his thumb with a ceremonial BLADE. Presses his
thumb to the parchment. Leaving his mark in BLOOD.

VLAD

(in Turkish)

Please.

MEHMED

What is one son? If you are virile
enough, you will make more.

15 EXT. DANUBE PLAIN - DAY

15

Vlad waits. A wreck. It's a deserted place, away from farms
and villages. From a distance, he watches

Mirena and Ingeras ARRIVE with Cazan.

INGERAS

(to Cazan)

Why did Papa tell you to bring us
here?

Cazan lies:

CAZAN

I don't know.

MIRENA

(to Ingeras)

It must be important.

Vlad APPROACHES. Mirena didn't think she'd ever see him
again...

Between his wife's unflagging trust and his son's innocent
confusion, Vlad feels ill...

Cazan catches Vlad's eye to give him the strength he needs...

DOWN THE ROAD, Hamza Bey and six brawny TURKISH SOLDIERS draw
near...

ON MIRENA. All at once she realizes the unthinkable is
happening.

(CONTINUED)

MIRENA (cont'd)
(to Vlad)
You promised this wouldn't happen.

CAZAN
(to Mirena, off Vlad)
He shouldn't have.

MIRENA
(desperate, to Vlad)
The day you asked for my hand, do
you remember what I said?

VLAD
You said no.

MIRENA
I knew what happens to the sons of
the Queen. You said things would
be different. You said if I loved
you, I should trust you.
(raw)
I love you.

Hamza Bey ARRIVES. The two groups face off, separated by
twenty paces. Vlad goes to meet him. Hamza Bey presents the
parchment.

HAMZA BEY
Sign the terms.

Vlad numbly CUTS HIS FINGER. Imprints the parchment.

Mirena backs away, pulling Ingeras with her...

MIRENA
(to Vlad)
How many have you killed for no
reason?
(off Ingeras)
Now you have one.

Ingeras looks back and forth between his parents, mirroring
their emotion, getting more and more upset...

CAZAN
(easy, to the Turks)
Everything is fine.
(steady, to Vlad)
Peace can't be bought cheaply.

MIRENA
He's our son.

CAZAN
(to Mirena, keeping his
voice down)
It would start a war.

MIRENA
(loud, to Vlad)
So start it.

INGERAS
I'll go.

Vlad stares at his son. Guttled.

MIRENA
(to Ingeras)
What are you saying?

INGERAS
I can do it.

Ingeras holds out his hand for his father to take... Vlad can't respond. But he does take his son's hand.

Mirena gives in to despair.

Vlad approaches Hamza Bey with Ingeras, each step heavier than the last...

INGERAS (cont'd)
You're proud of me, aren't you?

VLAD
(voice catching)
Of course I am.

HAMZA BEY
There is no shame in this. It is
the way of the world.

Time to say goodbye. Ingeras' eyes meet his father's...

Vlad recognizes his son's fear.

Hamza Bey reaches out to receive the boy...

ON VLAD. No. This is not the way of the world. Not anymore.

Vlad TURNS HIS BACK on Hamza Bey.

Ingeras is confused as Vlad takes him by the hand back toward Mirena...

15 CONTINUED: (3)

CAZAN
(to Vlad)
Don't.

HAMZA BEY
I will not allow my Sultan to be
disappointed.

The Turks' hands SLIDE TO THE HILTS OF THEIR SWORDS...

Vlad gives Ingeras back to his mother. Tears stream down Mirena's face, but it's not relief. She knows what's going to happen next.

VLAD
(to Mirena, off Ingeras)
Don't watch.

Hamza Bey and the six Turks CLOSE IN on Vlad, SWORDS DRAWN --

Vlad DRAWS HIS OWN and strikes --

Mirena LOOKS AWAY, shielding Ingeras with her breast before Vlad's sword hits its target. She HEARS Hamza Bey's final scream.

CLOSE ON MIRENA AND INGERAS. Her eyes shut tight, his covered. They might not be watching, but they can't help but HEAR the CLASH of swords. The terrible sound of BLADE MEETING FLESH. The CRIES of men dying.

Then all is quiet, save the sound of one man breathing hard. Mirena DARES TO LOOK...

The Turks of the delegation lie DEAD. Vlad stands over them with a well-used sword, chest heaving...

VLAD (cont'd)
It's not a child's place to save
his country. It's the
responsibility of men.

Mirena is stunned by Vlad's darkness, yet thankful for it.

Vlad locks eyes with her. They're in this together.

INGERAS
(agitated)
What happened?

Vlad puts a hand on his son's head...

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (4)

15

VLAD

You didn't do anything wrong.

Cazan shoves the parchment into Vlad's hand. Everything he has built destroyed.

CAZAN

Mehmed will punish all Transylvania
for what you've done.

ON VLAD. Mind churning. His gaze wanders across his land...
Time seems frozen.

His eyes land on far-off BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN. The
unnatural halo of clouds at its peak churn restlessly...

As Vlad focuses on it, the sounds of nature fall away to
SILENCE. An impossible idea forming...

VLAD

Whatever haunts Broken-Tooth, I
know it kills Turks.

Vlad embraces both Mirena and their son. He kisses her
roughly, desperately.

Vlad unclasps the SILVER CHAIN from Mirena's neck. Gives her
back the crucifix. He keeps the chain, balls it in his fist.

VLAD (cont'd)

Get to the castle. They'll be
marching soon.

16 EXT. BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

16

Vlad HIKES a steep trail up Broken-Tooth, through unforgiving
stone... Clouds smudge the peak, smothering it in shadow.

Vlad sees a DOOR high up on the mountain's jagged summit. An
ancient, narrow STAIRCASE wraps up the sheer cliff... Off
the edge of the stairs is a long fall straight to the RIVER.

Vlad girds himself, draws his sword, and CLIMBS...

17 INT. ROMAN TEMPLE - DAY

17

Vlad ENTERS, sword first. Heads down a tunnel into murky
half-light...

The space opens up into a mad warp of beautiful decay.
Fleshy white MARBLE, somehow folded like skin, vast as a
cathedral. Swirling, quasi-organic columns rise as if woven
from... what?

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

The vaulted ceiling is a writhing canopy... are they BATS?
And are those WOLVES lurking on the periphery?

Vlad can make out STATUES, sunk into the marble as if it were melting wax. Or perhaps the marble has been slowly creeping up to consume them for a thousand years...

Every statue is of the same person, the beatific face of a youthful Roman man.

Vlad can't make out the NAME chiseled in the base... He tries to scrape aside the white muck...

Vlad hears SOMETHING APPROACH... Braces for an attack, back against a column...

Vlad feels the breath of the damned on his ear. LOOKS UP -- RED EYES. A blur of movement -- then BLACKNESS.

18 INT. ROMAN TEMPLE - LATER

18

Vlad OPENS HIS EYES...

Vlad is UPSIDE DOWN, hung from the ceiling by a chain around his ankles. Like meat hung to drain. Below him, the floor is warped into TROUGHS stained black over the centuries.

Vlad struggles but his arms are bound... His armor is gone, along with his sword.

He sees VICTIMS hanging from the ceiling beside him -- Peasants, Gypsies, even some unlucky TURKS. Most are bloodless corpses... but a few are STILL ALIVE.

Vlad tries to keep his head, think...

A FIGURE IN A GOLDEN MASK

RISES from the floor... as the marble unnaturally stretches into a translucent membrane, draping the Figure.

Vlad realizes with horror the membrane is *skin*, white as the belly of a fish. The Figure's MASK bears the same frozen FACE as the statues.

The Masked Figure lazily WALKS amongst the hanging bodies... Pauses before an UNCONSCIOUS TURK.

THE MASKED FIGURE

Wake up.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

The Masked Figure rouses the Turk with a cold touch to his cheek. The Turk flails, much to the Masked Figure's delight.

THE MASKED FIGURE (cont'd)

Better.

Hanging bodies OBSCURE Vlad's view of what happens next...

The Masked Figure SLICES a sharp FINGERNAIL across the Turk's THROAT... Vlad HEARS LIQUID DRAINING into the trough beneath him...

Vlad's guts go cold.

The Masked Figure MOVES DOWN THE ROW... heading toward Vlad...

VLAD

I'm prince of this land.

The Masked Figure doesn't even look up.

THE MASKED FIGURE

What land is that?

VLAD

Here to the banks of the Danube.

THE MASKED FIGURE

Oh. Is that all?

The Masked Figure slices another Turk down the line, moving closer... Vlad fights to keep his nerve...

VLAD

These soldiers are my enemies.

THE MASKED FIGURE

(chuckles)

Ah. No, they will not bother you again.

The Masked Figure is almost upon him... Vlad's eyes land on the INSCRIPTION carved in the statues:

VLAD

"Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus."
Impossible...

Truth dawning, Vlad fights to keep his nerve. He now understands all the identical statues.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD (cont'd)
 (to himself)
 You were known for your vanity...

Suddenly, the Masked Figure is a breath away, pressing a sharp nail to Vlad's jugular...

THE MASKED FIGURE
 I was famed for my beauty.

VLAD
 You are the Emperor Caligula.

For this is the Masked Roman's true name.

CALIGULA
 (intrigued)
 How am I remembered?

Vlad hesitates before answering...

VLAD
 As the greatest of the Caesars.

Caligula doesn't respond. The chilling, milky-fleshed thing merely stares at him through his gleaming golden mask.

Vlad swallows hard...

CALIGULA
 (finally)
 You lie. I murdered friends. I debased my enemies. I spilled the blood of thousands.

Vlad had better think fast...

VLAD
 (flattering)
 But now you are a god, with powers that rival Jove himself.

Caligula proudly sets his shoulders.

CALIGULA
 You are as wise as you are pleasing to the eye.

Caligula RELEASES Vlad. Vlad tumbles to the ground...

Caligula reclines on his THRONE, gestures to a bejeweled GOBLET by a VAT. What drained through the trough has been collected here.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3)

CALIGULA (cont'd)
 Fill my cup. Quickly, while it's
 still warm.

Vlad beats back his revulsion, scoops the goblet into the
 dark liquid...

CALIGULA (cont'd)
 Most men blunder here. But you
 strode up like a proud billy-goat.

VLAD
 I want you to kill my enemies.

CALIGULA
 (imagining the glory)
 Ah the thought of it. Armies
 falling at my feet like ripe
 fruit...
 (after a beat, bitterly)
 But I'm trapped on this unworthy
 mountain.

VLAD
 I was told a man could free you.

Caligula's red eyes narrow... Vlad's crossed some line.

CALIGULA
 You were told wrong.

ON VLAD. To think he chased a Gypsy's dream... He knows now
 this was folly.

CALIGULA (cont'd)
 I have my own war. For a thousand
 years I've fought the Light.

A rumble of THUNDER... As Caligula grows angry, the storm
 rages more violently outside. Vlad spots his sword lying
 discarded on the floor, too far...

CALIGULA (cont'd)
 (shouts up at the heavens)
 You burn me. You see fit to judge
 me in Your glare. But I will not
 lay down.

Vlad realizes Caligula's addressing God Almighty himself.

VLAD
 Does "The Light" ever answer you?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (4)

CALIGULA

It insults me with Its silence.

VLAD

(after a beat)

We have that much in common.

CALIGULA

But the Darkness, it never stops
whispering.Despite the danger, Vlad's drawn by an irresistible need to
know...

VLAD

What does it say?

CALIGULA

Drink.

Caligula snaps for the goblet. Vlad hands it to him...

Caligula REMOVES HIS MASK and puts the goblet to his lips.

Vlad sees CALIGULA'S FACE. Corrupted. No longer human.
FANGS jut from his jaw.

Vlad can't help his reaction. He stumbles back, sickened...

CALIGULA (cont'd)

I repulse you.

Caligula stands, furious. His eye catches a statue
celebrating his former beauty...

CALIGULA (cont'd)

(to the statue)

Stop laughing!

Caligula pulverizes his marble face with his BARE FIST...

...then SWATS Vlad across the room.

Vlad holds his ribs, sees his sword now within reach...
Caligula STALKS TOWARD him...

Caligula BARES HIS FANGS --

Vlad grabs his sword and SLASHES Caligula's chest before he
can bite --Caligula merely laughs. Vlad watches in amazement as
Caligula's wound HEALS.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (5)

Vlad STRIKES AGAIN, burying his blade TO THE HILT -- so deep, the SILVER SIGNET RING on his fist presses Caligula's flesh.

This time Caligula HOWLS IN PAIN. The ring BURNS his skin, leaving a scalded IMPRINT behind...

CALIGULA (cont'd)
You dare bring silver into my
temple?

Caligula grips Vlad's wrist. Snaps up a PAIR OF TONGS and pulls the ring OFF Vlad's finger, as if it were molten hot...

Vlad YANKS free. Runs for his life...

Vlad hears leathery FLUTTERING behind him... An ivory-white BAT in pursuit...

ON VLAD. He stops. Running isn't the answer. He reaches into his pocket and finds Mirena's SILVER NECKLACE...

The Bat DISSOLVES into a SMOKY MEDIUM... REFORMING as Caligula. His mouth an awful fanged thing.

In a blur, Caligula SLASHES Vlad with his nails.

CALIGULA (cont'd)
(whispers in Vlad's ear)
I'll let the spiders drink it.

But Caligula should not have gotten so close... Vlad throws the silver chain over Caligula's head.

Caligula SCREAMS in agony. Vlad gets behind him and tightens the chain around Caligula's neck like a garrotte.

Caligula falls to his knees, clawing at the searing chain...

Vlad puts a foot between Caligula's shoulder blades and PULLS. The silver SLICES into his throat. Caligula SQUEALS.

VLAD
How do I get your power?

Larynx severed, Caligula laughs with a gurgling rasp:

CALIGULA
You?

Vlad winds the chain tighter, ignoring the pain in his gut.

VLAD
How?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (6)

Vlad keeps PULLING. Caligula is afraid now. The chain burned HALFWAY THROUGH his neck...

CALIGULA

Drink.

Vlad braces his boot against Caligula's back and gives the chain a sharp jerk --

SEVERES Caligula's head. Caligula's headless body twitches.

Vlad stares into the spreading puddle of Caligula's midnight-black BLOOD.

Vlad cups the black blood in his hands and DRINKS. Shuddering as the noxious liquid courses through him.

Vlad picks up his SIGNET RING, puts it on.

The sound of STONE SCRAPING STONE...

19 THE UN-DEAD

19

Push aside the lids of what must be COFFINS and RISE from the dirt within. Once Roman soldiers, senators and their wives. Now Caligula's Brood.

They look in dismay at Caligula, their fallen master... then turn their red eyes to his killer...

Vlad backs up as they SURROUND HIM...

The Brood doesn't attack. Instead, they KNEEL reverently.

CALIGULA'S HEAD

You think you've won?

Caligula's Head SPEAKS. Mouth twitching in a half-smirk...

CALIGULA'S HEAD (cont'd)

You're their king now.

The Un-Dead Brood begins to DIG A GRAVE in the dirt. Clawing with their bare hands.

CALIGULA'S HEAD (cont'd)

You are dying, Little Prince. You will be buried. And the earth you should rot in will be your prison... as it is ours. No matter how far we stray at night, at dawn our graves call us back. We can never be free.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

Vlad can feel Caligula's blood POISONING him... He'll be dead soon...

CALIGULA'S HEAD (cont'd)

You'll rule nothing but this mountain. Worshipped by dumb beasts. Endlessly pining for the glory you left behind.

ON VLAD, defiant even as his life slips away.

VLAD

I won't be like you. I won't be trapped. I won't be buried in dirt.

Caligula's Head cackles... It's impossible.

CALIGULA'S HEAD

All dead men have graves.

VLAD

Drowned sailors don't.

Caligula's Head twists in rage. Vlad has outfoxed him.

CALIGULA'S HEAD

No --

Vlad steps over Caligula's head as he STAGGERS

OUTSIDE

He looks over the edge of the dizzyingly SHEER DROP...

ANGLE TO REVEAL THE RIVER, far below at the Mountain's base.

The Un-Dead Brood reaches from the doorway to stop Vlad... But the SUNLIGHT sears their fingers... Keeping them at bay.

With his last bit of strength, Vlad lets himself FALL off the mountain.

20 VLAD HITS THE WATER

20

His body is SWEEPED ALONG by the RIVER...

...and carried past the ruts dug in the shore, where Shkelgim failed to dam the river with silver.

The river bears Vlad away from Broken-Tooth. Shkelgim's fear realized: Vlad was the man from the Gypsy's dream... and what was locked up has now been set free.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

ANGLE BENEATH VLAD, looking up from underwater. Vlad floats face down. He is dead.

21 INT. SULTAN'S TENT - SUNRISE

21

Mehmed watches the sun rise. General Ismail ENTERS, flush with anticipation.

GENERAL ISMAIL

All night we have waited, yet Hamza Bey has not returned.

Mehmed finishes his coffee. Sets the cup down with a clink.

MEHMED

Now at least your time in this shit heap will not be dull.

22 INT. BEDROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

22

Vlad's cheek rests on his pillow... He looks into Mirena's eyes. Bodies together, wrapped in a sheet. They've just made love.

It's uncommonly quiet in the castle. No sounds to disturb their reverie. No past behind them. No future waiting. Only now, here, together.

SUNLIGHT from an open window needles Vlad's eye. Mirena holds up her hand to shade him. Vlad weaves his fingers into hers. Backlit by the sun, their hands blush red at the edges.

CLOSE ON THEIR HANDS. The light behind grows BRIGHTER. The blood beneath the skin glows hotter...

Hotter...

A wisp of SMOKE issues from Vlad's finger...

23 EXT. FOREST STREAM - DUSK

23

Vlad's corpse is face down in the stream, caught on rocks. The corpse rolls over... His eyes OPEN, red and inhuman.

Vlad's silver ring BURNS HIS FINGER... He bares newly grown FANGS as he claws it off.

Vlad is disoriented... and thirsty. He drinks from the stream... but spits out the water as if it were poison.

Vlad catches sight of his REFLECTION and recoils: a monster stares back. He touches his fangs, unbelieving...

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

Vlad's thoughts focus. The world looks different. Sharper.

He remembers what he's done and why. Vlad retrieves his Signet ring from the stream bed.

Vlad hangs the ring around his neck by a leather cord. His tunic provides some protection from its painfully hot touch.

Vlad notices the VILLAGE ELDER behind him. Vlad hides his face under the hood of his cloak...

VLAD

Don't be afraid.

VILLAGE ELDER

(oddly unconcerned)

What is there to be afraid of?

Vlad hears a rhythmic POUNDING...

VLAD

The Turks are close.

VILLAGE ELDER

They've been in the village for hours.

VLAD

I can hear their drums.

VILLAGE ELDER

What drums?

24 EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - DUSK

24

Vlad passes smoldering homes, the air polluted with smoke... The ever-present DRUMMING in his ears...

Vlad sees jumbled bodies littering the ground... His people, slain by the Turks.

Vlad is brought to his knees by the sight.

VLAD

Forgive me.

The Village Elder stares at Vlad accusingly...

As Vlad walks amongst the corpses, he finds the Village Elder's body among them.

Vlad turns confused to the "Village Elder" standing behind him. The man is A GHOST.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

VLAD (cont'd)
You're dead.

VILLAGE ELDER
So are you.
(beat)
Feast on them, devil.

The Ghost of the Village Elder VANISHES into the air.

Vlad hears the DRUMMING getting louder...

A TURKISH CAPTAIN spots Vlad, whose face remains CONCEALED under his hood. The Captain commands a DETACHMENT of Ismail's Army.

TURKISH CAPTAIN
(to his men)
We missed one.

Vlad realizes with a shock that the DRUMMING he hears is actually the Turks' HEARTBEATS.

The Turks ENCIRCLE VLAD... One stalks toward him, LAUGHING.

Vlad picks up a SWORD from the ground...

LAUGHING TURK
At least this one isn't begging.

Vlad SILENCES the Laughing Turk with his blade.

Vlad fixates on the BLOOD staining his sword...

A GUST OF WIND blows out of nowhere as the Turks gird themselves against this intruder, who has proven to be no farmer...

Vlad clenches the ring in his fist. The silver BURNS. The pain SILENCES the heartbeats... The wind dies down...

The Turks ATTACK Vlad all at once. Vlad cuts down two, three... but a fourth BURIES his sword in Vlad's chest --

Vlad staggers back... then grins, realizing it doesn't even hurt. Vlad watches the wound HEAL...

Vlad flips back his hood. The Turks gasp. They see skin like a ghost, fangs like a demon. They RUN.

A few Turks desperately turn on Vlad with their spears... Vlad is shoved backward, along with an UNLUCKY TURK --

25 INTO THE VILLAGE WELL 25

A long fall INTO THE WATER. Vlad treads water, looking up...

High above, the Turks strain to push a MILLSTONE, weighing tons, over the well's mouth... Trapping Vlad.

It's PITCH DARK... but Vlad can still see through his new eyes. Sees the Unlucky Turk scrambling blindly to get away, but unable to get a handhold on the slippery stone walls...

Vlad touches the walls... finds a grip where no mortal could.

Vlad CLIMBS the well's sheer stone, lizard-like, amazed at his ability...

26 IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE 26

The Turkish Captain wipes his brow, relieved... when he hears the giant millstone PUSHED ASIDE from within.

Through fire and smoke, he sees a nightmarish vision of Vlad as he EMERGES from the well...

Vlad stalks toward the quaking Turkish Captain... Seizes him by the throat --

Vlad hears the Captain's heart POUND... the rush of blood so tempting... Vlad opens his jaws...

TURKISH CAPTAIN

A demon...

Vlad grips his ring. Resists the thirst.

VLAD

I'm still the Prince.

Vlad SLAYS the Turkish Captain with a swing of his sword.

27 EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - LATER 27

Vlad scabbards his sword, satisfied these Turks will no longer harm his people. He senses something behind him --

An OLD WOMAN

Holds up a frail hand to defend herself, looking fearfully at Vlad. She's small of stature and gaunt as a bag of bones.

OLD WOMAN

Don't hurt me, devil.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

Vlad covers his monstrous face with his hood...

VLAD
I'm not a devil.

Vlad touches the Old Woman to reassure himself she's real...

OLD WOMAN
(slyly, off his touch)
And she is not a ghost.
(kindly)
She has come to help. He is a foul
thing. A drinker of blood.

She knows what he has become.

VLAD
I won't be like those things.
Drinking blood like rats.

Vlad hears an odd SCRATCHING SOUND...

A strange COTTAGE now stands behind him. Steep roofs stacked
on steep roofs.

OLD WOMAN
She can end his thirst. This wish
she can grant.

VLAD
Why should I believe you?

OLD WOMAN
He has a little berry. Ingeras he
calls it. It is a tasty name.

ON VLAD. He finds himself oddly swayed by her words as she
pries at his greatest fear... He grips his silver ring...

VLAD
I would never hurt him.

But Vlad does not sound convinced...

OLD WOMAN
Then wish it.

VLAD
I wish... I no longer desired
blood.

The Old Woman snaps a bit of firewood -- making a short,
sharp STAKE... PRICKS Vlad's finger with the POINT.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (2)

The Old Woman ENTERS the cottage. Concocts a POTION, using the stake to stir it... Vlad's BLOOD mingling with unknowable ingredients...

Vlad warily accepts a cup of the potion... and DRINKS it down. Feels an ache in his heart... but nothing more.

VLAD (cont'd)
I'm still thirsty.

The Old Woman LEAPS at Vlad, jamming the wooden stake at Vlad's breast --

OLD WOMAN
He must die!

Vlad GRABS the stake just in time. The point HOVERS over his heart, just grazing his chest...

It hurts Vlad to the core. It shouldn't, but it does.

Vlad grapples with the Old Woman, who is SUPERNATURALLY STRONG. She gnashes her teeth in anger -- TEETH made of sharp IRON.

Vlad wrenches the wooden stake from the Old Woman's hands.

VLAD
What have you done to me?

OLD WOMAN
As he wished. He is changed. Now if his heart is pierced with wood, his thirst will end.

VLAD
I didn't ask to be killed.

OLD WOMAN
His thirst can end no other way.

Vlad notices something inside her cottage: a dirty CAGE strewn with tiny bones. He's aghast.

VLAD
You eat children...

OLD WOMAN
So will he.
(hisses)
She has seen it.

Her eyes roll back white as she relives her vision...

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (3)

OLD WOMAN (cont'd)

He is the one who escaped the mountain. He is the one who walks unbound by any grave. She will starve because his hunger will never end.

Vlad realizes who this Old Woman is.

VLAD

My nursemaid told me tales of you. A witch named Baba Yaga, who gives three wishes to any man who asks.
(realizes)
You owe me two more.

Baba Yaga grinds her iron teeth and pulls her hair. Despairing at what she has inadvertently made possible.

BABA YAGA

No, no, no. She is a stupid old crone. Wishes are for punishing the weakness of men.

VLAD

Then you shouldn't have started this.
(beat)
I wish I could defeat my enemies without spilling so much blood.

Baba Yaga grudgingly produces A SKULL. Flames dance in the eye sockets from a lighted CANDLE inside.

BABA YAGA

He looks into their eyes. He takes their fire for his own. He will bend the will of foe and friend.

Vlad stares into the skull sockets... As he concentrates, the flames are EXTINGUISHED... then RE-LIT in his eyes.

Vlad looks down at his corrupted bone-white hands as he contemplates his final wish...

VLAD

I wish they could see me as I was.

Baba Yaga blows a HANDFUL OF POWDER at Vlad...

BABA YAGA

He shines. He speaks music...
He wraps himself in glamour.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (4)

Vlad himself TRANSFORMS, back to the face he was born with.
He sees his HANDS are now rosy. A flawless illusion.

But Vlad sees WILDFLOWERS wilting at his feet...

VLAD

More tricks?

BABA YAGA

Nature cannot be deceived. It sees the truth and shuns him. For it is a plague he brings.

VLAD

The Turks are the plague.

BABA YAGA

(a final appeal)

He has not yet savored the blood of men, so he may yet be a man again.

VLAD

I still have things to do.

BABA YAGA

He has just seven days.

VLAD

Seven is enough.

Baba Yaga STEPS IN the doorway of her cottage as it MOVES AWAY... We see the cottage rides on hundreds of CHICKEN FEET, SCRATCHING like the tiny legs of a millipede.

BABA YAGA

Each day will be harder than the last. And one taste of blood will set your fate in stone.

28 INT. HALL - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

28

What sounds like a THUNDERCLAP shakes the castle --

Dimitru and Simion pick their way through air choked with dust...

DIMITRU

I never imagined cannons could be that big.

SIMION "THE WISE"

That's probably what the poor bastards in Constantinople thought.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

Castle Dracula is under siege. The hall is a scene of panic.

A few BOYARS have taken refuge... along with what's left of Vlad's meager CASTLE GUARD. Some SERVANTS as well, mostly women and their children. Nobility and peasant cower as equals in a union of fear.

Mirena holds Ingeras to calm them both. Grim Cazan sits nearby, tension between him and his queen.

They hear another cannonball HIT... Followed by a third EXPLOSION. The great castle GATE can't withstand much more of this...

Ingeras holds his hands over his ears... Simion glares at him:

SIMION "THE WISE" (cont'd)
We'll all die now. For him.

DIMITRU
Show respect or I'll string you up
by your tongue.

SIMION "THE WISE"
And the Prince's respect for us?
He started this war. Where is he?

Mirena feels everyone's eyes on her, including her son's... She has no answer.

29 EXT. TURKISH CAMP - OUTSIDE CASTLE DRACULA - SUNSET 29

SMOKE clears...

Three GIANT TURKISH CANNONS are aimed at the castle gate. The CHIEF CANNONEER steps away from their red-hot barrels. He inverts an HOURGLASS. They will take hours to cool.

Ismail's CONTINGENT OF SOLDIERS settles in to wait. A small force by Turkish standards -- just sixty or so men. Such is their contempt for the Transylvanian will to fight.

General Ismail and a few Officers eat at a well-set outdoor table... Chatting, indifferent to the tableau of ruin.

30 VLAD 30

Watches, HIDDEN IN SHADOW. Red eyes radiating fury. He ventures a fingertip into diminishing DAYLIGHT... It BURNS.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

VLAD
(eyes on Ismail)
Night's coming soon.

31 AT THE PERIMETER OF THE TURKISH CAMP

31

A SQUAD OF TURKS patrol... unnerved by the distant HOWL of wolves.

Their LEADER trips -- finds it is the CORPSE of one of their own, a KNIFE through his heart. The knife bears Vlad's distinctive DRAGON emblem...

SQUAD LEADER
It is the symbol of their Prince.

A SHADOW passes over the Leader, who looks up in fear at the figure standing over him...

32 ELSEWHERE IN THE TURKISH CAMP

32

A tough VETERAN eats an APPLE. A YOUNG SOLDIER holds his lance tight, peering into the dark. News travels fast:

YOUNG TURKISH SOLDIER
An entire squad. How does one man
slit the throats of an entire
squad?

The FLUTTER OF BATS overhead distracts the Veteran... He takes another bite of apple --

VETERAN TURKISH SOLDIER
(goaded)
Maybe this place is haunted.

The Veteran SPITS out the food, gagging. The apple has impossibly become ROTTEN...

The Veteran sees that the Young Soldier, standing next to him just a moment ago... is GONE.

33 INT. ISMAIL'S TENT - NIGHT

33

General Ismail angrily berates a frightened SUBORDINATE...

GENERAL ISMAIL
Find who is doing this.

The Subordinate SCURRIES OFF, leaving General Ismail alone.

VLAD
Ismail.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

Ismail feels a jolt of terror as Vlad unfolds from the gloom.

Vlad's EYES shimmer with MESMERIZING fire. Ismail's PUPILS DULL as Vlad's will carves into his brain:

VLAD (cont'd)

I have some new orders for you.

34 INT. HALL - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

34

In the hall, impending death weighs on everyone. Some pray. Some weep. Some are angry.

Mirena wets a WOUNDED MAN'S lips with WINE. He gazes adoringly up at her.

MIRENA

I hope you like it. It's from the Prince's private stock.

Ingeras sleeps. His Governess smiles sadly at Mirena.

GOVERNESS

(off the Wounded Man)

A pretty girl does more for him than any drink of wine.

Outside the broken gate, someone approaches... A hush falls.

Mirena can't see what's happening. Is it Turks? It can't be, people aren't reacting right...

It's Vlad.

He peels back his hood to reveal HIS FACE, restored to normal by the witch's magic.

People press toward their prince as if he alone might deliver them from evil...

Vlad anxiously searches out his wife... Mirena throws herself into his arms. Vlad hugs her and doesn't let go.

VLAD

I lost the chain.

MIRENA

It wasn't the important part.

Mirena touches her crucifix, now hanging from a silken cord.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

Vlad sees Ingeras curled up next to his Governess. He hesitates, scared to touch his sleeping son. Smiling at the Governess, he covers it well:

VLAD
Let him sleep.

Vlad meets everyone's expectant eyes. He gathers himself...

VLAD (cont'd)
(addressing the people)
They wanted my son. A good prince
would have given him up. A good
prince would have kept the peace.
(catches Cazan's eye)
I'm sorry I failed you.

Everyone is silent. Despair hangs heavy as a shroud.

VLAD (cont'd)
But we can still beat those Turks
out there.

Simion gestures derisively around the hall... Barely a dozen Transylvanians able to wield a sword.

SIMION "THE WISE"
There's five of them for every one
of us.

VLAD
Together you're stronger than all
of them.

People BUZZ, unsure...

VLAD (cont'd)
Your heart is one heart. Your
hands are one hand...

Vlad can feel the people's emotion rising...

VLAD (cont'd)
Make your hand a fist. Let your
fist grip a sword. Follow me out
that gate... and the Danube will be
so stained with Turkish blood that
the Black Sea will turn red.

People CHEER. Vlad raps Dimitru on the chest, nods mischievously toward the Turkish ranks.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: (2)

34

VLAD (cont'd)
Just watch.

35 EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

35

Ismail's Turks surround the castle gate...

...yet as we scan their faces, we see Vlad's campaign of terror has taken its toll.

AT THE CANNONS, General Ismail lurks. Eyes glassy. His mind not his own.

Chains squeal as the castle gate OPENS... Battered iron and oak rises as

VLAD LEADS THE CHARGE

Running headlong out of the castle -- straight at the black barrels of Mehmed's mighty guns. It seems like madness...

Turkish CANNONEERS light their fuses --

Under Vlad's spell, General Ismail HACKS at a cannon's WINCH ROPES with a knife --

CHIEF CANNONEER
General, no...

General Ismail KILLS the Chief Cannoneer without thinking --

The cannon barrel DROPS, burying itself in the dirt --

The cannon FIRES point blank into the earth and BLOWS UP.

The explosion OVERTURNS the cannon beside it like a toy. SHRAPNEL rips through the Cannoneers.

SMOKE billows. Vlad sees:

The LAST CANNON, its fuse is still burning... Aimed at him.

The Cannon SHOOTS. IMPACTS just feet in front of Vlad -- Enveloping him in a FIERY CLOUD...

Vlad EMERGES from the smoke, UNHARMED. Storming toward the Turkish line...

Vlad's men shout, inspired by their Prince... and CHARGE behind him.

But the Turks see something else, something the Transylvanians do not:

(CONTINUED)

The MOUNTAIN behind the castle MOVES... Its rocky landscape shifts as if breathing... Its cliffs OPEN UP...

It's not a mountain anymore. Two vast BAT WINGS unfold, revealing the visage of Vlad as a giant DEMONIC CREATURE.

The mountain-sized Vlad-Demon looks down at the insignificant Turkish Soldiers and stretches its great wings... casting a terrible shadow over the whole land.

The Vlad-Demon is a nightmare hallucination conjured for the Turks' eyes alone. Terror spreads.

Vlad and the Transylvanians hit the Turkish line --

The Turks' nerve is shattered. Their line BREAKS.

TIGHT ON VLAD. Furiously POWERING through his enemies. All FALL beneath his scything blade.

ON CAZAN. He watches Vlad kill. Sees Vlad's unquenchable desire to slay every single man who dares fight under the Sultan's banner.

Victory. Smoke from the ruptured cannons hangs heavy... Most Turks lay dead, the rest have fled into the fields beyond Tirgoviste.

Vlad's Fighters raise their weapons, exultant. Not a single man was lost.

Vlad can't tear his eyes off the BLOOD painting his sword...

CAZAN

A remarkable victory. You proved me wrong.

VLAD

It was all of us.

But Vlad sees Cazan appraising him the way he does.

CAZAN

When they tried to take away your son, the way you killed them... there was something in your eyes I hadn't seen since I brought you back from the Turks. Something I hoped I'd never see again.

36 CONTINUED:

VLAD

Look. It's me.
 (puts an arm around Cazan)
 What do you advise me to do?

CAZAN

Kill as many Turks as you need to.
 Not as many as you want to.

37 INT. HALL - CASTLE DRACULA - PRE-DAWN

37

Mirena looks for Vlad among the women embracing brave sons and husbands.

Mihai bumps Mirena as he runs past. (He's the boy whose father Vlad hired to be Cazan's valet).

MIHAI

(bows, mortified)
 Pardon me, my lady.

MIRENA

(smiles)
 So pardoned.

Vlad APPROACHES. Mihai's overwhelmed by the Prince's attention.

VLAD

Where's your father?

MIHAI

He was outside the castle when the
 Turks came...
 (voice catching)
 Next time I want to fight with you.

Vlad doesn't let Mihai see the sadness he feels at the boy's father's death. Instead he leans close, conspiratorially:

VLAD

I'm going teach every one of my
 soldiers to speak Turkish.

Vlad says a *PHRASE IN TURKISH*. Mihai repeats it with pride.

MIHAI

What does it mean?

Vlad WHISPERS the translation to Mihai, who LAUGHS at the obscenity, forgetting his loss for a moment. Mirena's heard this particular insult before.

(CONTINUED)

MIRENA

I pity the Sultan's mother...

Vlad watches Mihai RUN OFF... Mirena sees the cost of war written on Vlad's face.

INGERAS

Papa!

Ingeras bounds toward Vlad. In his eyes his father is a returning hero... Normally Vlad would love nothing more than to embrace him. But now he eyes Ingeras with trepidation, knowing what he's become...

VLAD

My hands are dirty...

MIRENA

He doesn't care.

Vlad has no choice as Ingeras flings himself into his father's arms.

As Vlad holds Ingeras close he can hear the TAPPING of his son's heart...

...and catches their REFLECTION in an ornate MIRROR on the wall.

Bone-white flesh stares back at him. Red eyes. Fangs. It's him. This vile thing... hugging Ingeras.

ON MIRENA. She notices Vlad's horrified expression. But from her point of view her husband -- and his mirror double -- are their usual, handsome selves.

MIRENA (cont'd)

What's wrong?

Vlad realizes only he can see the truth.

He presses Ingeras back in Mirena's arms. The boy's hurt. It's unlike Vlad not to shower him with affection.

VLAD

We can't stay here.

Vlad glances outside. Dawn threatens...

VLAD (cont'd)

Be ready to move by sunset. We'll travel by night.

38 INT. MEHMED'S TENT - DAY

38

Mehmed stands at a table studying maps of Vienna's defenses. General Omer ENTERS and hands him a message.

GENERAL OMER
Word from Tirgoviste.

ON MEHMED, reading. Anger cold as the Danube in December.

MEHMED
My old brother...
(to General Omer)
This land must be secured.

General Omer measures his response carefully:

GENERAL OMER
Sultan, this scrap of dirt is not
worthy.

Mehmed looks west. Toward Europe. Toward his future.

MEHMED
You cannot leave those behind you
undefeated. It gives those before
you hope.

GENERAL OMER
Your victory is already written in
the stars.

MEHMED
I prefer to write it myself.

39 EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE - EVENING

39

Vlad, Dimitru, and Simion stand on a precipice, high above Tirgoviste. An eagle's eye view of the Transylvanian plains:

The TORCHES of MEHMED'S ARMY. For now, just pinpoints of light snaking toward them...

Simion is sick with fear. Even Dimitru can't hide his misgivings.

SIMION "THE WISE"
What have we done?

VLAD
Let's get moving.

(CONTINUED)

SIMION "THE WISE"

Where? Your castle was our stoutest defense and it couldn't stand up to a fraction of that.

DIMITRU

We can fight the way our great-grandfathers fought the Magyar horde. Use the forests and mountains to strike and hide. Chisel away at them one at a time.

(hopeful)

Six months of that and --

VLAD

Not six months. I'm going to win this war in six days.

That gets a reaction.

VLAD (cont'd)

I'm taking my family to Cozia Monastery. You're welcome to come.

SIMION "THE WISE"

To pray?

VLAD

I had Cozia's walls built thick enough to defend against a siege. I expanded the caves, stocked them with enough grain for weeks. The Borgo Pass narrows to a choke point there.

(hard)

We'll beat him the same way we beat Ismail.

Dimitru marvels at the Prince's foresight...

DIMITRU

This is why you've been so generous building monasteries?

VLAD

How pious do you think I am?

An isolated stronghold nestled amongst steep cliffs...

41 INT. MONASTERY HALL - EVENING

41

Austere stone. An assembly of MONKS break bread... The front door SWINGS OPEN --

Brother Lucian ENTERS from the road. His body's tired from hard travel, but his focus is sharp.

BROTHER LUCIAN
 God tests every age. The great
 test of ours has come.

The Monks gather around him as he eats, ravenous...

YOUNG MONK
 News of the war has already reached
 us. We've been praying for swift
 victory over the Turks.

BROTHER LUCIAN
 Wars come and go. They are a part
 of God's plan...
 (beat)
 What we face now is the Devil's.

That scares the Monks. Lucian does not speak lightly.

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
 I have been crisscrossing the
 land... The whispers and signs are
 unmistakable... What was long
 imprisoned on Broken-Tooth has been
 set free.
 (grim)
 We must be ready.

42 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

42

A band that fled Vlad's castle hikes through woods, a bright MOON lighting their way. Noblemen and Servants, Guards and Mothers, young and old.

Vlad guides them, keeping his distance from Ingeras... He looks back at his son, who's trying to keep pace among the adults...

Vlad sighs. He can't keep his distance any longer.

Vlad swings Ingeras up onto his shoulders. Ingeras beams.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

VLAD
(grunts from the effort)
I don't remember you being this
heavy.

INGERAS
Then we'll take turns.

Vlad and Mirena share a laugh.

Within earshot, lame Cazan makes an effort to keep pace with
Dimitru...

DIMITRU
I can toss you over my shoulder.

CAZAN
I'm not a sack of turnips.

Simion slips, dirtying his silken sleeves.

SIMION "THE WISE"
And worse it gets.

Vlad glances back at his tired people...

VLAD
(to Ingeras)
Someday this will all be your
problem.

INGERAS
(thoughtfully)
I think it is now.

Vlad BACKTRACKS down the trudging line of people, urging them
on, his son on his shoulders.

43 EXT. DANUBE SHORE - NIGHT

43

MEHMED'S ARMY marches on Transylvanian soil. The AZABS in
front: Turkish Lancers in green and red. The SIPAHIS protect
the flank, wearing high white turbans.

Mehmed stops his men from transporting his massive CANNONS...

MEHMED
Leave them.
(to General Omer)
And lighten the men's loads. We
will be marching fast.

44 EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

44

TENTS are pitched. Vlad's weary people eat around a few campfires.

Ingeras plays chase with Mihai... The children's energy indefatigable despite the circumstances.

Vlad finds Cazan sitting by a fire, rubbing his sore legs.

VLAD

They're not soldiers. Even the ones that think they are.

Vlad warms his hands. He feels unusually cold...

VLAD (cont'd)

We'll sleep through the day and continue tomorrow night.

GYPSY WAGONS can be seen in the distance.

CAZAN

The Gypsies are leaving. Looks like every one of them to a man.

VLAD

Good riddance.

CAZAN

What are they afraid of? The Turks only care about us.

Vlad lets the question hang.

CAZAN (cont'd)

You're practically sitting in the fire.

VLAD

I can't seem to warm up.

CAZAN

That's why people get married.

45 INT. MIRENA'S TENT - NIGHT

45

Vlad and Mirena kiss as they pull each other's clothes off.

They fall on a bed of furs... People can be heard milling about the campsite through the tent's thin canvas walls...

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

MIRENA

Shhh...

VLAD

I'll be quiet. Can you?

Vlad pulls her into a kiss... Trying to smother his fears...

Then Vlad hears Mirena's HEARTBEAT. Growing louder.

Vlad abruptly stops.

MIRENA

What is it?

Vlad gets up, quickly pulling on his clothes. Clutches the ring around his neck. Mirena's heart HAMMERING in his ears.

MIRENA (cont'd)

Where are you going?

Mirena reaches out to him...

VLAD

Get the hell away from me.

Vlad's words land like a slap in the face. Shocking them both. Vlad EXITS the tent fast.

46 EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

46

Vlad LEAVES CAMP to escape the unrelenting HEARTBEATS of the living... Struggling to keep control...

A sudden WIND tugs at his clothes... Treetops sway...

Vlad glances SKYWARD... The same unnatural CLOUDS that crowned Broken-Tooth now float overhead. The weather mirrors Vlad's ferocious thirst...

Nearly silent WHOOSHES as BATS flit through the branches, joining him...

But Vlad focuses his attention on a shadowed stand of trees, where he sees something we can't...

VLAD

Don't think I haven't noticed you following me.

SHKELGIM creeps into the moonlight. Vlad is stunned by how he's changed:

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

The once-commanding Gypsy is dishevelled. Hollow-cheeked. Erratic. Possessed by some inner fire that's consuming him.

Shkelgim unsheathes a DAGGER...

SHKELGIM

I hear the whispers on the wind.
The one who escaped the mountain
hides behind the face of a man.

VLAD

Then you should know a knife won't
do you any good.

But Shkelgim CUTS the palm of his OWN HAND... Making a fist, he squeezes his blood into a rusty CUP.

SHKELGIM

There is only so far on this earth
I can run...

The temptation of hot spilled blood makes Vlad shiver...

SHKELGIM (cont'd)

...and it is not far enough.

Shkelgim offers the cup to Vlad. It seems insane to Vlad. Repugnant.

SHKELGIM (cont'd)

Let me serve you.

Vlad SLAPS the cup from Shkelgim's hand. Throws the Gypsy against a tree.

VLAD

Get away from me.

Shkelgim BOWS low.

SHKELGIM

Yes, master.

Shkelgim SCURRIES OFF into the night.

ON VLAD. Shaken by Shkelgim's worship, shaken by everything.

47 EXT. CAMPSITE - PRE-DAWN

47

Gray light before dawn. Vlad RETURNS to camp. Everyone is fast asleep. Quiet but for the tents whipping in the wind.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

Vlad grips his SILVER SIGNET RING in his fist... It BURNS TO THE BONE. Pain is the price to keep his thirst in check. It's only getting harder...

But for now, the silver serves its purpose. Vlad's thirst calms. The wind dies. The odd clouds disperse.

Vlad joins Dimitru who's alert, perched on A RISE. They both survey the vast sweep of the land:

DAWN has already reached Tirgoviste. So has Mehmed.

VLAD
(to Mehmed)
You left your cannons behind.

DIMITRU
He's coming faster than you thought.

Vlad's troubled brow confirms it.

VLAD
(off the tents)
We can only let them rest a couple hours, then we have to keep moving.

Vlad can see distant mountain peaks already lit by the RISING SUN... It hurts his eyes.

DIMITRU
(pinches Vlad's cheek)
You've lost your color. When was the last time you slept?

48 EXT. FIELDS OUTSIDE TIRGOVISTE - MORNING

48

Mehmed leads his Army, marching to DRUMBEAT double-time. The armored juggernaut covers ground fast.

Mehmed finds a TERRORIZED TURK wandering the fields outside Vlad's castle...

TERRORIZED TURK
(rambling)
He has the devil's face... He has the devil's face and cannot die...

Mehmed and General Omer share a look of alarm... The Terrorized Turk and a couple scattered others are the last remnants of GENERAL ISMAIL'S FORCES.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

MEHMED

The men should not see this.

Mehmed and Omer RIDE AHEAD...

They find General Ismail slumped on the ground.

MEHMED (cont'd)

Stand to address me, Ismail.

General Ismail looks up, eyes wild.

GENERAL ISMAIL

A message from Prince Vlad...

(as if possessed)

I can still recall the summer nights in Adrianople. The smell of jasmine from the gardens... The air like a kiss...

Mehmed looks at Ismail with confusion...

GENERAL ISMAIL (cont'd)

I remember one night a terrible thunderstorm came off the desert...

I'd known storms -- thunder shakes these mountains every other day.

But you... you were terrified.

(stares Mehmed down)

Tell me, do you still cry when you're scared?

Mehmed draws his sword and KILLS General Ismail on the spot.

MEHMED

(to General Omer)

Do the same to the others. Fear is a sickness. I will not have it spread.

GENERAL OMER

I will tell the executioners they are containing an outbreak of plague.

Mehmed can read General Omer's face.

MEHMED

You also think their Prince has become a demon?

(CONTINUED)

GENERAL OMER
 (reluctantly)
 Ismail was not prone to fantasy.

MEHMED
 As a young man, I was invited to
 dine at the table of Uzun Hasan,
 when he was King of Persia. A
 magician performed at the feast.
 He summoned a cobra from thin air,
 before my eyes. Truly wondrous...

It is clear that to this day, it still amazes him.

MEHMED (cont'd)
 It was meant to kill me, of course.

GENERAL OMER
 How did you survive?

MEHMED
 I pinned its tail with my fork.
 And cut off its head with my knife.
 (beat)
 Sorcery is no match for steel.

Mehmed turns to

BRIGHT-EYES, who takes a knee before his master.

MEHMED (cont'd)
 They fled. There will be women and
 children, moving slowly.

FIVE MORE JANISSARIES stand behind Bright-Eyes, as steely and
 battle-hardened as he.

MEHMED (cont'd)
 You are the tip of my spear.

Vlad is feverish, sleeping restlessly. Alone in his own
 tent... Lost in delirium, he doesn't stir when

Mirena ENTERS. She's alarmed to see Vlad looking so ill.

Mirena rubs a damp cloth over Vlad's forehead... She opens
 his shirt to wipe his chest... and finds the BURN MARK where
 his ring lies.

Mirena REMOVES THE RING from around Vlad's neck...

49 CONTINUED:

Vlad WAKES with a start.

MIRENA

You need help.

VLAD'S P.O.V. Mirena is speaking, but he can't hear a word she's saying. Her voice drowned out by her THUNDERING HEART.

Vlad gropes for the silver signet ring around his neck... but it's not there.

Vlad looks at Mirena as if she were a stranger...

MIRENA (cont'd)

Vlad?

A terrifying beat.

Vlad pulls Mirena to the ground, TEARS open her dress at the collar. She struggles... but Vlad is consumed with the thirst for blood...

Vlad bares his FANGS. He lowers his jaw to her throat --

One sound cuts through the thunder: Ingeras' VOICE OUTSIDE, across the camp...

INGERAS' VOICE

Mama? Where are you?

Sanity flickers in Vlad's eyes. He pulls away from Mirena...

VLAD

I'm sorry...

Mirena is curled in a ball, shielding herself from Vlad.

Vlad is crushed by the thought that he would have killed her.

Vlad draws his knife and SLASHES OPEN the roof of the tent --

SUNLIGHT POURS DOWN on Vlad. As the rays of the sun touch him, the BLOOD BURNS in his veins. Vlad is engulfed in FLAMES... He does not move. He lets himself burn.

Mirena gasps, repulsed as Vlad's awful Un-Dead face is exposed...

But in his red eyes, Mirena can still recognize her husband. And her husband is dying.

MIRENA

Vlad...

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: (2)

Mirena pushes Vlad OUT OF THE SUNLIGHT. Throws her cloak over him to smother the fire. Vlad lies in a SHADED CORNER. His flesh charred, gritting his teeth in pain.

MIRENA (cont'd)

What are you?

VLAD

I became the thing men fear on
Broken-Tooth. Not a ghost.
Something else.

Mirena's hand touches her cross to give her strength...

VLAD (cont'd)

I wanted to drink your blood.

This is almost too much for Mirena to bear...

MIRENA

May God strike down whoever did
this to you...

VLAD

I chose this.

MIRENA

Why would you ever do such a thing?

They hear Ingeras calling out again, closer now:

INGERAS'S VOICE

Mama?

VLAD

(to Mirena)

Because I sent corpses back to
Mehmed instead of our son.

Mirena reels, suddenly complicit...

VLAD (cont'd)

A man can't win this war.

50 EXT. TENT - DAY

50

Mirena finds Ingeras outside, sleepy-eyed, looking for her.

MIRENA

Back to sleep, sweetheart.

51 EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY 51

Tethered GOATS graze. Mirena APPROACHES a goat with resolve. Checks to be sure the animals' docile eyes are the only ones that see her...

Mirena has a WATER SKIN in one hand, a KNIFE in the other...

52 INT. TENT - DAY 52

Vlad pours GOAT'S BLOOD into his mouth from the water skin. He grimaces at the taste, but sucks it down greedily...

Vlad's injuries HEAL. The incessant heartbeats are QUIETED, but not entirely silenced. Some small measure of relief...

Vlad feels Mirena watching as he wipes the blood from his mouth. She's trying not to unravel as the reality sinks in.

MIRENA

You'll undo this, won't you? You can undo this?

Vlad nods.

VLAD

I haven't taken the last step.

MIRENA

What is it?

VLAD

Drinking what comes from men instead of goats. I'll never do that.

She sets her shoulders, finding a measure of solace.

MIRENA

Then God will forgive you.

VLAD

As easy as that?

MIRENA

It's not that easy. You have to ask.

Vlad breaks the handle off a wooden hairbrush, leaving a sharp tip: an improvised STAKE.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

VLAD

A wooden stake through my heart
will kill me.

Vlad puts the stake in Mirena's hand. Her eyes well up. She hands it back.

MIRENA

It would kill us both.

53 EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

53

Vlad's band of Boyars, Guards and Servants prepares to move once more. The tents are LEFT STANDING. All extra weight is cast off...

INGERAS

(to Mirena)

Where's papa?

Mirena gathers her composure and lies to Dimitru, who's wondering the same thing:

MIRENA

The Prince went on ahead. You'll
lead us the rest of the way.

VLAD INSIDE THE TENT

Forced to hide from the sun. Unable to leave with his people, his wife and his child.

54 INT. TENT - LATER

54

Vlad waits in the deserted camp.

Behind him, the TENT'S OPENING is bright with deadly DAYLIGHT.

Vlad hears HEARTBEATS... He squints up the HIGH CREST LINE and sees:

Bright-Eyes and the Janissaries travelling fast. One carries a BASKET OF CARRIER PIGEONS on his back. They are single-minded predators, tracking Mirena and the band of Transylvanians.

Vlad frantically SHOUTS to get their attention:

VLAD

Down here! Come get me, you bastards!

55 UP ON THE CREST LINE 55

The Janissaries don't hear him. They ignore the abandoned campsite below them.

56 DOWN IN THE CAMPSITE 56

Vlad watches from his tent as the Janissaries move past, tracking his people.

VLAD

Mirena...

But Vlad cannot warn her.

57 EXT. BORGO PASS - SUNSET 57

Bright-Eyes crouches on a RIDGE, having located his prey:

Below, the unsuspecting Transylvanians make their way through the narrow valley known as the BORGO PASS.

BRIGHT-EYES

Tell the Sultan where his enemies
will be buried.

The Janissary Bird Keeper affixes a note for Mehmed to one of the CARRIER PIGEONS. Releases the bird INTO THE AIR...

58 INT. TENT - SUNSET 58

Vlad paces, distraught. A prisoner waiting...

The SUN finally SETS.

60 EXT. BORGO PASS - NIGHT 60

A chill FOG hugs the forest. Hard to see past the person in front of you...

The group slogs through the valley, everyone cold and exhausted. Dimitru leads alongside Cazan and Simion.

Ingeras holds his mother's hand, one foot plodding in front of the other...

INGERAS

I'm tired...

They hear a BELL ringing the call to prayer...

MIRENA

Listen.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

COZIA MONASTERY looms above the mist. Relief spreads. Their long journey is nearly over...

SIMION "THE WISE"

These monks better have a wine cellar.

CAZAN

They're Hesychasts. Hesychasts meditate. They don't drink wine.

SIMION "THE WISE"

It was good enough for the Last Supper.

Dimitru SHUSHES THEM. Warily scans the valley walls...

THE JANISSARIES

Burst from the cliffs, shadows in fog --

The people RUSH wildly for the Monastery... Pure panic.

BRIGHT-EYES

They think their house of God will save them.

The Janissaries ATTACK the group like quicksilver. The outmatched Castle Guards mount a rear-guard action, hoping it will allow the others to reach Cozia's gates...

Bright-Eyes glides through the mayhem. Hunting a specific target...

MIRENA

Clutches a frightened Ingeras.

Dimitru and a few BRAWNY CASTLE GUARDS rush to protect them...

DIMITRU

Let's get you inside.

Dimitru scoops up Ingeras and CARRIES HIM... The Brawny Guards form a wall behind them --

Bright-Eyes whirls into the Castle Guards like a dervish, wielding TWO SCIMITARS like silver flashes. The Guards DROP, no match for Bright-Eyes' skill...

61 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

61

Dimitru BOUNDS OFF THE TRAIL, carrying Ingeras through a MAZE OF PINES. Mirena at his side...

They hit a steep incline, dropping to a CHASM. A dead end.

Bright-Eyes steps silently from the trees behind them.

DIMITRU
(smiles grimly, to Mirena)
Nothing to worry about.

Dimitru sets down Ingeras next to his mother. Bright-Eyes cleans his scimitars with a snap of his wrists.

Bright-Eyes LUNGES with one blade -- Dimitru blocks it.

Bright-Eyes' drives his second scimitar through Dimitru's chest. Dimitru falls.

Mirena meets her executioner's baby blue eyes.

MIRENA
(to Ingeras)
Run.

Ingeras does. Mirena stays to give him a chance...

Bright-Eyes raises his scimitar for a clean stroke --

VLAD
Janissary.

VLAD

VAULTS at Bright-Eyes --

Fangs bared. Irises glowing like red ingots. Primal. Animal. His glamour discarded.

Bright-Eyes pivots, SWINGS his scimitars --

Vlad SLAPS the swords away. Steel breaks. Bright-Eyes' hand is SHATTERED, mangled fingers twisted like roots.

Vlad flings Bright-Eyes backwards, DOWN AN INCLINE...

Bright-Eyes skids, grasping vainly for a handhold, OFF THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF.

ON DIMITRU. Barely alive, he watches in incoherent fear as

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

The red-eyed thing wearing the Prince's clothes whirls on Mirena --

And just like that, Vlad looks like himself again. But the veil has been dropped. The truth revealed.

MIRENA

(numbly)

You came.

Vlad rushes to Dimitru's side to aid him... But Dimitru CLAWS the ground, trying to get away from this demon...

DIMITRU

You're not Vlad...

VLAD

Dimitru I'm --

DIMITRU

God help me.

Dimitru dies, eyes frozen wide in terror. Mirena says a silent prayer, not just for Dimitru, but for them all.

62 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

62

Ingeras stumbles through the trees... Mirena catches him. Embraces her crying child.

MIRENA

We're safe. Your father's here.

63 EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

63

Most of the Transylvanians made it inside. But not all...

Castle Guards SHIELD a few female servants and children. Death is certain...

...as Janissaries EMERGE FROM THE FOG around them.

One Janissary is YANKED BACKWARDS, swallowed in the murk. His shouts ended by the CRACK of his neck.

The Janissaries rush to confront their unseen attacker.

The Transylvanians watch them FADE FROM VIEW... Hear the desperate WHISPERS of scimitars cutting nothing but air... CRIES of surprise... Then fear... Then pain...

Then nothing.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

Something is flung from the fog --

The BASKET OF PIGEONS. The Janissary Bird Keeper is gone, but the frenzied birds are spattered with his blood.

With the basket UPENDED, the birds fly FREE.

TWO RED EYES pierce the gloom. Searching for anything left to kill... The body from which they burn remains HIDDEN.

The women and children huddle behind the terrified men...

With an unsympathetic glower, the eyes withdraw.

ANGLE ON THE FOREST

A surviving STOUT JANISSARY, hidden, huddles in fear...

A shadow looms behind him...

Bright-Eyes. Alive. He puts one of his good fingers to his lips. Shhh.

64 INT. MEHMED'S TENT - NIGHT

64

General Omer finds the Sultan alone. Something is wrong.

GENERAL OMER

Word from the Janissaries?

Mehmed gestures to the BLOODSTAINED PIGEONS flitting in a cage.

MEHMED

When we fought as boys, I would beat him every time. But once, I caught him smiling at me. I knew what his smile said...

(beat)

If this were not your house... if you were not the Sultan's son...

Mehmed dusts himself off...

MEHMED (cont'd)

Prepare the men.

65 INT. MONASTERY HALL - NIGHT

65

Inside, a few of Vlad's people who died during the attack have been laid in repose.

The Monks lead the traumatized survivors in PRAYER.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

Vlad ENTERS, interrupting.

VLAD
Get off your knees. Prayers won't
defend these walls.

The Monks are taken aback. Those praying look stung.

CAZAN
What's wrong with you?

VLAD
The Turks won't wait for mass to
end.

CAZAN
They're more afraid of whatever
killed those Janissaries.

Realizing this only makes Vlad angrier.

VLAD
These mountains are thick with
wolves. And blood was in the air.

Brother Lucian APPROACHES Vlad.

BROTHER LUCIAN
There is evil greater than the
Turks.

VLAD
Not in my experience.

Lucian blocks Vlad's way. Insistent.

BROTHER LUCIAN
Prince, there's something I need to
show you.

Vlad, impatient, FOLLOWS Brother Lucian to

AN ALCOVE. The monk selects an aged BOUND VOLUME...

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
It is able to move amongst us,
hidden.

ON VLAD. Growing unease... Does Lucian suspect him?

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: (2)

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
 The ancient Assyrians named it
 "Ekimmu," or "Departed Spirit," but
 even in those times these things
 were already old.

(reading from the book)
 "Knowing no care, they grind the
 land like corn. Knowing no mercy,
 they rage against mankind. They
 are demons full of violence,
 ceaselessly devouring blood."

Lucian turns the page to reveal a woodcut ILLUSTRATION. It depicts a figure with a likeness of a fanged demonic face.

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
 This is its true face.

Vlad's stomach jumps, but he betrays nothing.

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
 You must help me destroy it.

Brother Lucian doesn't know it's him. Vlad is relieved.
 Mostly relieved.

VLAD
 Should be easy enough to spot.
 (turns to leave)
 Until then, I have defenses to
 build and swords to sharpen.

BROTHER LUCIAN
 This creature will not stop until
 the earth is dead.

ON VLAD. Lucian's words make him pause. But surely this is not his future...

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
 How strong is your faith?

VLAD
 I believe in God. But I don't have
 any faith in him.

66 EXT. MONASTERY GROUNDS - PRE-DAWN

66

Vlad gathers all his able-bodied men -- what's left of his Castle Guard, a few Servants and some stalwart Monks. They are now Vlad's FIGHTERS, forty in all.

Vlad tests the heft of a fresh-cut SHARPENED WOODEN POLE.

(CONTINUED)

VLAD

I want more like this. Buried at high angles ten paces behind the trenches...

(points)

Dug there. And there. Across the narrowest part of the pass.

Captain Petru nods. Vlad slaps him on the back.

VLAD (cont'd)

Their chests are armored, but their throats are soft.

Across all the activity, Vlad sees Ingeras and Mihai picking wild berries and feasting. Vlad lingers on the incongruously peaceful scene...

Ingeras spots his father and waves. Vlad waves back... Feeling as far from his son as if he were on a ship leaving shore.

Vlad turns his attention to the SKY. The sun has already cast one side of the valley in gold...

He's remained outside as long as he can afford. Time to head indoors...

Vlad passes GRAVE DIGGERS -- Brother Lucian among them -- burying the dead. One grave bears Dimitru's name, sprinkled with fresh cut WILDFLOWERS.

BROTHER LUCIAN

Your friend is in my prayers.

VLAD

You would have liked him. He saw doomsday in every calendar.

Vlad WALKS toward the Monastery...

Where Vlad was standing, Brother Lucian notices the wildflowers are now suddenly putrid.

ON BROTHER LUCIAN. Sinking dread...

VLAD

Is almost to the MONASTERY DOOR... when A RAY OF SUN flares from a notch in the cliffs...

...and floods the doorway with sunlight.

66 CONTINUED: (2)

Vlad is STOPPED AT THE THRESHOLD. He can't pass through without burning...

VLAD (cont'd)
 (low, to heaven)
 You spur on daybreak just to spite me?

Vlad catches Brother Lucian staring at him. The monk's frozen, the pieces of the puzzle falling into place...

Vlad tries to remain calm as the LINE OF SUNLIGHT encroaches by the second... He heads toward

THE SMITHY

It's still in SHADE. A separate hut on the monastery grounds. Inside, BLACKSMITH MONKS repair arms and armor.

Three of the Smithy's walls are open to the air, screened with canvas, but it will have to do.

Just before DAYLIGHT floods the valley, Vlad DUCKS INSIDE.

67 INT. SMITHY - DAY

67

The BLACKSMITH MONKS curiously look up from their work...

Vlad knows he's trapped in here. He plays for time, examining weapons laid out to cool...

VLAD
 I need a sword.

Vlad looks up to see Lucian judging him from the doorway.

BROTHER LUCIAN
 You can still repent.

Vlad knows he's in trouble. But he keeps up the charade.

VLAD
 (to the Blacksmith Monks)
 Did I forget to say "please?"

The Blacksmith Monks shift their weight uncomfortably...

BROTHER LUCIAN
 Fly, brothers. Seek refuge outside. In the sun.

The Blacksmith Monks quickly EXIT THE SMITHY...

(CONTINUED)

VLAD

What are you accusing me of?

Lucian's eyes bore into Vlad's. Drop the act.

BROTHER LUCIAN

I don't know how you found this path. Perhaps the devil ensnared your spirit against your will...

VLAD

You can't understand. You took a vow. You have no wife, no son.

BROTHER LUCIAN

Some good part of you remains.
(beat)
Repent.

VLAD

For what?

Lucian gathers himself. Finally:

BROTHER LUCIAN

May Christ have mercy on you.

Brother Lucian TEARS DOWN one of the CANVAS WALLS.

SUNLIGHT bursts into the Smithy, catching Vlad full in the face. Vlad ERUPTS INTO FLAME.

Vlad's monstrous face is revealed for all to see.

Lucian trips back in terror. It is the face from his book.

Vlad collapses in a SHADOWED CORNER, in agony, flesh charred.

Through a haze of pain, Vlad peers OUTSIDE...

A half-dozen Castle Guards have cordoned off the Smithy, crossing themselves in mortal fear...

Monks try to minister calm, but they are just as afraid as the others.

Vlad sees Mirena vainly trying to push past the Guards to get to him...

The HEARTBEATS outside are a CACOPHONY.

A RAT scurries into the Smithy. Stops in front of Vlad.

67 CONTINUED: (2)

67

Vlad snatches the rat and BITES it. At this small infusion of blood, Vlad's burns begin to HEAL... More rats trickle in to rejuvenate their master...

68 EXT. MONASTERY GROUNDS - OUTSIDE THE SMITHY - DAY

68

Mirena argues emotionally with Simion...

MIRENA

Give him the chance to explain himself.

Simion practically drips self-righteous piety.

SIMION "THE WISE"

We all succumbed to his witchcraft.
I forgive you for that.
(addressing the people)
Who stands with me?

69 INT. SMITHY - DAY

69

Now HEALED, Vlad watches as three members of his Castle Guard raise their hands to volunteer... Led by Simion, they APPROACH the Smithy. Armed with TORCHES...

VLAD

Simion, I warn you.

SIMION "THE WISE"

Why would I turn from God's work?

VLAD

You've never been more than a fig-eating jackal.

Vlad searches the faces of men once loyal to him, and he to them...

VLAD (cont'd)

(angry)

Stefan... Janos... Stop this.

But all he finds are the unforgiving stares of his assassins.

TORCHES are thrown, setting FIRE to the Smithy. Flames eat at the roof and walls, letting in the sun's deadly rays...

Vlad CRIES OUT as LIGHT RAKES HIS SKIN... Out of time...

Vlad notes the pile of drained rats. Focuses his mind...

OUTSIDE THE SMITHY

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

A BLACK RAT RUNS into the MOVING SHADOWS of the men feeding the blaze... darting from WALKING SHADOW to WALKING SHADOW underfoot, barely avoiding the direct rays of the SUN...

No one notices the Black Rat scamper into the shade...

70 EXT. MEHMED'S ARMY - NEAR BORG PASS - DAY

70

Mehmed's Army marches to DRUMBEAT.

Mehmed gazes ahead with anticipation. General Omer grows fearful as they draw closer to their foe...

MEHMED

I have never seen you like this.

GENERAL OMER

God does not shine on this place.

MEHMED

It will not be said that I was stopped here. By him.

Mehmed signals. The drums STOP. The Army halts.

MEHMED (cont'd)

(to his men)

Do you remember when you first joined the army? You wanted to pick up a sword and start fighting right away... but the first thing they taught you to do was march.

The Soldiers are rapt, hanging on their Sultan's every word.

MEHMED (cont'd)

When they blindfolded you, you did not believe you could march without seeing... But you could.

(beat)

Remember their words: "You have no eyes, you have no ears, you have no heart... just feel the drum pound in your chest."

Mehmed moves through his ranks, golden armor shining...

MEHMED (cont'd)

When next the drums go still, you will draw your swords. Tonight, your Sultan guides you.

71 INT. MONASTERY HALL - SUNSET

71

Mirena stares at the pillar of smoke that was the smithy. Grief hasn't come yet. Cazan kneads his cane...

Ingeras is filled with dread, even though he doesn't understand what's happened.

INGERAS

When's papa coming back?

Mirena just brushes back a lock of his hair.

MIRENA

(to Cazan)

We need to finish the defenses.

CAZAN

(quietly, to Mirena)

You knew. And yet you said nothing.

MIRENA

I loved him.

Simion strides up. Wearing a face of deepest condolences.

SIMION "THE WISE"

How is our new Prince faring?

MIRENA

(sotto)

He doesn't know his father's gone.

SIMION "THE WISE"

Well, now he can do for us what his father never could.

Simion signals for his accomplices to take Ingeras...

SIMION "THE WISE" (cont'd)

I pray the Sultan still wants him.

Furious, Mirena pulls Ingeras tight to her...

MIRENA

You wouldn't dare.

Captain Petru ENTERS, grim-faced.

CAPTAIN PETRU

There's no body.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

Simion's stomach twists in a knot.

72 EXT. MONASTERY GROUNDS - SUNSET

72

Word that Vlad still lives floods the Monastery. Everyone degenerates into a terrified jumble, running in all directions...

Mirena leads Ingeras through the confusion... She knows what's coming.

The SUN SETS... A frightened hush descends on everyone...

She waylays Mihai. Puts Ingeras' hand in his.

MIRENA

(to Mihai)

Take him to my room and shut the door. Don't let him look outside.

INGERAS

(scared)

Mama --

MIRENA

(to Mihai)

Now.

Mihai RUSHES OFF with Ingeras...

The crowd PARTS...

VLAD

Walks through his people's midst carrying a SHARPENED POLE from the defenses. Hate so rabid that reason is impossible.

Mirena sucks in her breath when she sees her husband. Realizes there's nothing she can do.

Simion's throat tightens. He looks at the pole... then back at Vlad...

Vlad drives the pole AT SIMION'S GUT --

ON MIRENA. She averts her eyes at the sound of Simion's scream. A piece of her dying too.

A GRISLY SHADOW is cast on the ground at her feet... The shadow of Simion's skewered body lifted into the air... and planted upright.

Vlad fixes furious eyes on the men who joined Simion...

(CONTINUED)

VLAD

(to Captain Petru)

Impale the rest of the traitors.
You see how the Turks do it. Avoid
the heart.

Under Vlad's gaze, Captain Petru and the Castle Guards restrain Simion's accomplices... The order is terrible, but what choice do they have?

CAZAN

(to Vlad)

When I brought you home from the
Sultan's palace, I thought I still
saw goodness in you. Despite
everything you had done.

(beat)

But you're still one of them.

VLAD

There's a reason the Turks are the
ones taking over the world.

Everyone watches in horror as the Guards pick up sharpened poles with shaking hands... The Traitors BEG FOR MERCY as the sharp tips are aimed at their chests...

Vlad's fury shows no sign of dimming...

...until he sees Mirena's eyes boring into his. This isn't who you are. This isn't the man I love.

ON VLAD. Revulsion plays across his face. A moment of clarity. He notices for the first time the weeping women and children... His own people, terrified of him...

Vlad suddenly HALTS Captain Petru before the deed can be done. His manner is brusque, allowing no weakness to show:

VLAD (cont'd)

That's enough.

Spared execution, the Traitors collapse, weeping.

CLOSE ON INGERAS

REVEAL the boy peering through a crack in the shutters INSIDE THE MONASTERY. Eyes wide. Impacted by his father's violence. He saw everything.

MIHAI (O.S.)

(calls, looking for him)

Ingeras? Ingeras?

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: (2)

INGERAS' P.O.V., partially blocked by the shutter crack, of Simion impaled.

OUTSIDE, BROTHER LUCIAN

EMERGES from the crowd.

BROTHER LUCIAN

Kneel. Bow down before the power
of our Lord Christ.

Brother Lucian raises his CRUCIFIX in challenge. The other Monks follow suit in a wall of solidarity...

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)

Leviticus 17. Quoth the Lord: "If
any man eat blood, I will set my
face against his soul. For the
life of all flesh is in the blood."

Vlad looks at the power of God arrayed against him. Crosses wielded by brave-hearted men of faith.

VLAD

Go back to your books.

Their crosses have no effect.

BROTHER LUCIAN

(to his fellow Monks)

He should not be able to
withstand... This can't be.

MIRENA

It means there's still hope for
him. It must.

Vlad righteous ire can barely be contained. No one can hold his gaze.

VLAD

Do you think you're alive because
you can fight? Because you're
brave? You're servants. Peasants.

(beat)

You're alive because of me.

Vlad points down the pass, the way Mehmed will come.

VLAD (cont'd)

And I'm the only one who can save
you now.

73

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE BORGO PASS - NIGHT

73

A BLACK BAT with the wide wingspan of a hawk FLIES ABOVE the marching Turkish Army... From this height, Mehmed's golden armor is a mere speck to be brushed away...

The Bat DIVES -- zeroes in on its golden target... Mehmed's helmet looks up too late as --

The Black Bat is upon him, TRANSFORMING back into Vlad.

VLAD

Your war ends now.

Vlad tears off Mehmed's helmet --

But this is NOT MEHMED: it is his boyish-faced ADJUTANT. A DECOY wearing golden armor.

VLAD (cont'd)

(grabs him by the throat)

Where is he?

Vlad scans the Turkish Army... Mehmed could be any one of them. A needle in a haystack.

VLAD (cont'd)

Coward. Show your face.

Then Vlad realizes something is wrong. The marching Turkish Soldiers do not seem to be aware of him...

Vlad STRIKES a Turk down. The soldier SCREAMS as he DIES...

The Army marches on. Their discipline unwavering...

Vlad pulls off the dead Turk's helmet -- sees the soldier is BLINDFOLDED and his ears packed with BEES' WAX. It's the same with every Turkish Soldier...

74

MEHMED IN THE TURKISH RANKS

74

Dressed as a common soldier, he blends in with the rest. But his eyes and ears are uncovered. He calls out to Vlad, his echoing voice impossible to pinpoint:

MEHMED

They cannot fear what they cannot see.

ON VLAD. Watching with futility... The Turks march blindly past him in pace to the thundering drums.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

They'll arrive by dawn.

75 EXT. MONASTERY GATES - NIGHT

75

The night sky is lightening in the east...

On the monastery walls, the Transylvanian Fighters can't see doom approaching, but they can hear it. Turkish DRUMS echo through the pass...

Vlad ENTERS through the gate. He's given a wide berth.

CAPTAIN PETRU

Prince, they're still coming. You said --

Vlad strides past without a word, consumed with anxiety.

76 INT. CHAPEL - MONASTARY - NIGHT

76

Vlad stands alone in the chapel. Chastened. His eyes raised to the crucified Christ.

VLAD

I can't save them. I've tried everything but I can't find a way. I'm out of time. So I guess you made your point.

(beat)

But you can still save my people. You can spare my wife and my son. You could do it with a thought. They don't deserve this.

Vlad drops to his knees at Christ's feet.

VLAD (cont'd)

I suppose you want me to beg. So I'll beg. Please. Help them. Show me a sign.

Vlad waits. Never has there been such silence. Even the candle doesn't flicker.

VLAD (cont'd)

You want me to accept it. Accept death. Grief. You're an expert in suffering, aren't you? So you sit up there and relish ours. That's your dirty secret. You want revenge.

(seething)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

VLAD (cont'd)

You son of a whore, I see right through you. You're just getting even.

Vlad rises, fists clenched.

VLAD (cont'd)

Well, you're not the only one who can be vengeful. You think I've done my worst? I swear if you take my family I'll gorge like a pig on the blood of your flock. Guilty, innocent, I won't care. I'll send them all back to you.

Vlad senses something, turns --

Ingeras stands still in the doorway, dressed in his night-clothes, holding something behind his back... Vlad wonders if he heard.

VLAD (cont'd)

You should be in bed.

INGERAS

The drums are too loud.

Vlad holds out his arms to comfort him.

VLAD

Come here.

Ingeras hesitates...

VLAD (cont'd)

What is it?

INGERAS

Are you sick?

How much does Ingeras know?

VLAD

Who told you that?

INGERAS

I heard Simion talking with Mama.

(quiet)

Is that why you killed him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD

(after a beat)

I killed Simion because he wanted to hurt you. It was as simple as that.

Ingeras nods. The boy thinks he understands.

Vlad gestures to whatever his son's got behind his back...

VLAD (cont'd)

What are you hiding?

Ingeras shows his father a LOAF OF BREAD.

INGERAS

If you were sick, I thought it would make you feel better.

ON VLAD, moved. He wonders if he can still eat it.

VLAD

Maybe. Bring it here.

Vlad breaks the bread in two. Half for Ingeras, half for himself. Vlad raises it to his lips...

Ingeras notices his father's hesitancy...

Vlad takes a cautious bite...

Nothing happens. It tastes as he remembers.

The two of them sit and eat. For a moment, everything seems the way it was before this nightmare ground down on them.

VLAD (cont'd)

I do feel better. Thank you.

Then the Turkish DRUMS creep back into his consciousness...

ON VLAD. The irony is cruel. The moment sours. It all seems a lie. Here in what are maybe their final hours, what wisdom can he possibly give his son?

VLAD (cont'd)

I won't always be around. You will be alone. And someday if fortune allows, you'll have this country to rule... So I want you to remember something. Don't trust anyone.

(harsh)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED: (3)

VLAD (cont'd)

Not the people who sing songs of
your glory. Not the advisors who
flatter you. Not even your family,
who tell you they love you.

(beat)

Not even me.

Ingeras has never seen his father look so lost.

INGERAS

But when the Turks came to take me
away, you stopped them. It's why
you got sick, isn't it? To save
me.

Vlad's blindsided. Does his son really understand the
sacrifice he made?

VLAD

(overwhelmed)

Yes.

INGERAS

I'll remember that.

Vlad wraps Ingeras in his arms. Brought low by humility and
love.

The cynicism he felt when entering this sacred space falls
away. From his son, he's been granted some measure of
absolution from the mistakes he knows he's made.

VLAD

Back to bed now.

Ingeras gives his father one last squeeze and EXITS.

Alone, Vlad looks down at the remaining crust of his son's
gift... A tightening in his chest... Then pain --

Vlad RETCHES UP THE BREAD, rejected by his body as poison.
He collapses, UNCONSCIOUS.

77 INT. MIRENA'S CHAMBER - MONASTERY - NIGHT

77

Vlad wakes in bed. Mirena sits nearby. The tension between
them is unspoken. She gestures to a CUP OF ANIMAL BLOOD
within his reach.

MIRENA

You'll need your strength.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

Vlad drinks. He knows he should be nauseated by it, but it's healing effects are nearly instantaneous...

VLAD

He outsmarted me. Mehmed's army
will pour past our defenses and
that will be the end.

The Turkish DRUMS beat out the passing time...

Mirena finally looks at Vlad:

MIRENA

You've fought and you've struggled
and kept your soul your own. Your
curse can be forgiven. You can be
a man again.

VLAD

(takes a sip from the cup)
Turks can't taste worse than rats.

Mirena spins on him, chilled to the bone...

MIRENA

I won't let you.

Vlad's frustration bubbles over.

VLAD

I could have more power. Enough to
make storms. Enough to crush those
dogs.

MIRENA

And then what?

VLAD

Do you want to die?

MIRENA

I still have faith.

Vlad points to the cross around her neck:

VLAD

He'd let you be butchered.

MIRENA

(correcting him)
I have faith in you.

That makes Vlad pause.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD

I don't understand that either.

But he's sure he's never loved her as much as he does right now.

MIRENA

I'd rather die with you by my side
than spend Eternity alone. I
always knew you'd die by the sword.
If it's today, I'm ready to go with
you.

Mirena leans into Vlad's chest. Tears come.

Vlad's hand slips in his pocket to find a handkerchief to dry them...

He also finds a crumpled parchment:

The TERMS OF SURRENDER Mehmed offered and Vlad refused.
Choices made, chances lost. Seems like a thousand years ago.

Vlad notes Mehmed's THUMBPRINT in BLOOD, now dried brown...

MIRENA (cont'd)

What is it?

Vlad's eyes glint with an idea. He lowers his nose to
Mehmed's blood print and CATCHES THE SCENT...

VLAD

I can find the son of a bitch.

Vlad is flush with excitement, a condemned man given a last-minute reprieve...

VLAD (cont'd)

Tomorrow I'll set things right.

Mirena desperately wants to believe him, but she feels the weight of an opportunity lost...

MIRENA

Tomorrow, then.

78 EXT. MONASTERY BATTLEMENTS - PRE-DAWN

78

The Turkish Army enters the pass... Across the sky, dawn ticks ever closer...

Vlad walks the BATTLEMENTS... His motley group of Fighters jump to attention.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

VLAD

This war will be decided here, on
this ground, by each of you.

They eye him with fear, but Vlad is satisfied they'll do
their duty.

VLAD (cont'd)

Now take your positions.

79 EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE THE MONASTERY - PRE-DAWN

79

Vlad climbs to a SPUR OF ROCK overlooking the Monastery.

Vlad gestures to the sky... First one BAT, then ANOTHER
comes to Vlad...

80 EXT. NEAR THE MONASTERY - PRE-DAWN

80

Hiding, Bright-Eyes and the Stout Janissary can hear their
Army's DRUMS. Bright-Eyes scans the Monastery defenses...

They spot Mirena and Ingeras on the balcony.

Bright-Eyes sees there is no way he can get past the men
defending the battlements.

BRIGHT-EYES

Get word to the Sultan.

81 EXT. MEHMED'S ARMY - BORGIO PASS - PRE-DAWN

81

Mehmed MARCHES within his blindfolded Army...

General Omer weaves through the ranks to report, the Stout
Janissary at his side.

GENERAL OMER

Word from behind their lines.
Vlad's child has been found.

Mehmed does not respond because his eyes are drawn upward...

82 VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR

82

Extends his hand... It appears as if he casts a GIANT SHADOW
across the Turkish Army advancing up the pass below... A
colossal BLACK HAND, alive and writhing...

The "shadow" is an impossible number of BATS in the shape of
Vlad's hand. An extension of his will. "Fingers" extended
like claws... The "hand of bats" SLAMS DOWN on the Turks,
breaking into a swarm of millions.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

IN THE FRONT RANKS OF MEHMED'S ARMY

Tiny fangs BITE exposed skin, drawing BLOOD...

But the Turkish Soldiers resist tearing off their blindfolds.
The march CONTINUES...

MEHMED AND GENERAL OMER

Watch the SWARM OF BATS moving TOWARD THEM, leaving no
Turkish Soldier untouched...

GENERAL OMER

Bats cannot kill men.

Mehmed feels a dawning alarm...

MEHMED

He is looking for me.

83 VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR

83

Sniffs the air. Tensed to strike...

84 ON THE MONASTERY BATTLEMENTS

84

Vlad's men shudder as the Turks bear down. How can they face
so many?

85 MEHMED

85

Runs to the Drummers... Tears off the LEADER'S blindfold...

MEHMED

Stop the march.

The Drummers cease beating. Soldiers pull off their
blindfolds, ready to fight... but see a MAELSTROM OF BATS.
They react with primal fear.

MEHMED (cont'd)

(feigning fear)

Run for your lives.

Their Sultan's "cowardice" breaks them. The Turks FLEE...

MEHMED (cont'd)

(under his breath)

Come, Vlad. Take the bait.

Mehmed sees the BATS almost upon him, and runs...

86 VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR 86

Sees the Turks falling back... Senses the advantage swing.
SHOUTS down to his men:

VLAD
Kill them while they run.

87 THE TRANSYLVANIAN FIGHTERS 87

Charge INTO THE PASS, chasing the routed Turks. Even
outnumbered twenty to one, maybe there is hope after all...

88 BRIGHT-EYES 88

Sees the Transylvanians unknowingly clear a path for him.
Bright-Eyes sprints to the Monastery, SCALES THE WALL...

MIRENA ON HER BALCONY

Hand on Ingeras' shoulder, watching the battle turn. Her
heart lifts...

Bright-Eyes ENTERS.

BRIGHT-EYES
*Your son will live. But in time he
will not remember you.*

89 MIHAI 89

Bursts into the room, hefting a sword too heavy for him...
Bright-Eyes BACKHANDS Mihai like the child he is.

Mihai bravely repeats the *Turkish insult* Vlad taught him.
Bright-Eyes stops cold. We've never seen him angry before.

Bright-Eyes SLASHES Mihai's leg, raises his sword to finish
him off --

Mirena flings a shovelful of HOT COALS from the fireplace in
Bright-Eyes' face.

Mirena and Ingeras RUN back out ONTO THE BALCONY... as the
first RAYS OF THE SUN strike the distant mountain peaks...

90 MEHMED ON THE BATTLEFIELD 90

Swats at attacking BATS. Teeth BITE his hands, draw BLOOD --

91 VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR 91

Catches Mehmed's scent in the air. The tumult of battle is filtered out... Mehmed's distant figure becomes clear.

VLAD

Got you.

92 ON THE HIGH BALCONY 92

Mirena lowers Ingeras over the edge onto

THE ROOF OF THE CLOISTERS

Bright-Eyes LUNGES for her as she follows her son. She falls onto the roof. Tiles CUT her shoulder...

93 VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR 93

Freezes. He senses their peril.

VLAD

Mirena.

Vlad dives OFF THE CLIFF -- transforms into a BAT mid-air. Black wings speed him toward the Monastery...

94 MIRENA AND INGERAS ON THE ROOF 94

Move carefully over slick TILES. The roof angles down and ends in a SHEER DROP.

Bright-Eyes PURSUES. Mirena SLIPS... SLIDES halfway over the EDGE.

Feet dangling. Losing her grip...

INGERAS

Mama --

Ingeras hasn't the strength to help her.

VLAD AS A BAT

Sees his wife hanging from the roof... Almost there...

The SUN RISES.

Sunlight IGNITES Vlad like a shooting star --

Vlad CRASHES on the high balcony... In the form of a man, his body haloed in fire, Vlad crawls

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTO MIRENA'S CHAMBER

Vlad is trapped in the shade, his body ravaged. He has a stomach-churning VIEW of his wife and child's plight:

MIRENA AND INGERAS ON THE ROOF

Her hands slipping... Without saying a word, Bright-Eyes PICKS UP INGERAS. Ingeras CRIES OUT.

Bright-Eyes sees Vlad watching helplessly... Bright-Eyes tucks the child under his arm, dips in a window and is GONE.

VLAD

Reaches out to his wife, only to BURN when he touches the light. Mirena knows there's nothing he can do.

VLAD
(to Mirena)
Hold on.

Vlad looks across the room at Mihai, who stares back in fear. Mihai can't get away, hobbled by the injury to his leg...

Mirena realizes what Vlad is going to do.

MIRENA
Don't...

Mirena watches in horror as Vlad sinks his fangs into Mihai's neck and DRINKS until the boy is dead.

ON VLAD. He can feel himself COURSING WITH POWER... his will now able to enact what his heart desperately desires...

THE SKY ABOVE THE MONASTERY

Is stained from horizon to horizon by STORM CLOUDS commanded by Vlad. Day becomes NIGHT.

MIRENA

Shuts her eyes against her tears. Mirena lets go of the roof, choosing her fate. She FALLS --

Vlad CATCHES Mirena's arm. Pulls her up...

...exposing the CRUCIFIX that hangs from Mirena's neck.

The CROSS GLOWS WITH WHITE LIGHT in Vlad's presence. A light Vlad cannot bear. The power of God repels him.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED: (2)

94

The two stare at each other, Mirena's eyes hollow.

MIRENA (cont'd)
Your hands are cold.

Mirena chooses to let go of her husband's hand.

She FALLS AWAY into the abyss. Vlad DIVES after her.

As Vlad PLUMMETS after his beloved, the BLINDING LIGHT of the cross denies his hands purchase on her...

Vlad TRANSFORMS... His corporeal form RIPS APART into anything that can reach her. Anything that can save her... A falling, smoky chaos of RAT... BAT... WOLF... and the howling, anguished DEMONIC FACE that is his own.

But Mirena is forever out of reach.

95 DOWN ON THE GROUND

95

Vlad cradles his wife's dead body, wracked with sobs.

VLAD
Mirena...

Nearby, her cross still smolders with white heat.

96 MEHMED ON THE BATTLEFIELD

96

Stares curiously up at the darkened sky... then turns his attention to the Transylvanians.

MEHMED
(irritated, to Omer)
Attack.

97 CAZAN INSIDE THE MONASTERY

97

Stands among the women and children. He can only watch as the Turks SURGE IN... A Turk CLUBS him across the brow.

98 EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

98

Vlad looks up at the approaching Turks... His grief and rage have turned to madness...

Vlad sees Mehmed deep in their midst, on horseback. Ingeras sits on the saddle in front of him, a scared and crying trophy.

Vlad CHARGES the whole Turkish Army. Smashes into their lines. Killing like a beast, fury unmatched.

(CONTINUED)

One against a thousand.

VLAD

Kill you all.

Turks clamor away from Vlad, hardened soldiers unmanned by fear. Vlad cuts through them with ease...

Vlad is unstoppable. Pushing relentlessly toward his son.

Frightened Azabs set their lances. Vlad careens into them, heedless. Lances snap like twigs, but PIERCE his flesh.

Vlad tears into an echelon of Sipahis... slays them by the dozen... Scimitars break, armor sunders like paper... He drives deeper into the Turkish ranks like the whirling eye of a hurricane. A red storm of vengeance.

But one thing keeps the Turks from dropping their swords and running:

They see that Vlad BLEEDS.

The Turks are fighting back now. Landing blow after blow... For every one Vlad kills, ten more take their place... and there is only so fast he can heal...

Vlad goes to one knee. Struggles to his feet to meet the next wave hacking at him with abandon.

Every Turk wants a piece now. To avenge their brethren. To say that on this day they killed the one who could not die.

Vlad reaches out to Ingeras, who recedes from him like a mirage... He failed his only son.

WE SEE FROM HIGH ABOVE

Vlad is merely one man in an ocean of Turks. He is ENGULFED.

The clouds DISSOLVE... The SKY CLEARS...

The sun IGNITES the Un-Dead blood staining Turkish blades... Everywhere Vlad's blood poured or spattered is AFLAME...

Vlad lies drained from a thousand cuts. He does not burn. He doesn't have any blood left in him.

MEHMED

You were just flesh after all.

Sight dimming, Vlad sees Mehmed with his distressed son.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED: (2)

MEHMED (cont'd)

I will not make the same mistake my father did. I will have to stunt this little weed so he does not grow so strong.

Mehmed shows Ingeras the SILHOUETTE of Simion's impaled body.

MEHMED (cont'd)

This is what your father will be remembered for.

Vlad can say nothing. His LIFELESS eyes stare up at his son.

MEHMED (cont'd)

(to his men)

Bury his wife. Leave Kaziglu Bey for the crows.

99 EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

99

Cazan limps from the abandoned Monastery, feels the GASH on his forehead where he was struck.

The Turks are gone.

Grief-stricken, Cazan kneels at Vlad's discarded body. He rolls him over. Vlad's eyes are still open. Cazan slides his palm over Vlad's face to close the lids...

BLOOD on Cazan's hand drops onto Vlad's cheek.

Cazan notices the DROPLET stir... slowly moving... drawn into Vlad's MOUTH.

Cazan thinks he understands.

Cazan lays his WRIST across Vlad's MOUTH... Presses the BLADE OF HIS KNIFE firmly against his own artery...

CAZAN

You're not finished.

Cazan steels himself... and CUTS --

CLOSE ON VLAD'S EYES. They OPEN. Alive and angry.

VLAD

Where's my son?

CAZAN

Mehmed took him.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

Vlad catches Cazan as he slumps. Only now does Vlad see Cazan's CUT WRISTS and realize the sacrifice.

VLAD

Do you want to kill them?

CAZAN

Yes.

Vlad CUTS HIS OWN WRIST, gently presses it to Cazan's lips...

VLAD

Drink.

Vlad gazes across the battlefield...

Most of his Fighters lie dead. But some, grievously wounded, still cling to life...

100 EXT. MONASTERY - LATER

100

Vlad stands at Mirena's grave. Cloak snapping in the wind...

VLAD

I know hell exists, so I know
there's a heaven. You're there.
So I know I'll never see you again.

Standing behind Vlad

A BROOD OF VAMPIRES.

No longer "Ekimmu," Vlad has created something new.
"Vampire," from the Latin root "Pi". "To drink."

TWO DOZEN in all. They were his Fighters. Near death. Now they will never die. Their Un-Dead eyes are red and hungry.

VLAD (cont'd)

(to Mirena's grave)

Your soul can rest knowing that I
will get our son back.

Vlad turns to his Vampire Brood. They BOW.

Cazan bows too, unnaturally strong and vibrant. No need for a cane. His hand and foot have been RESTORED...

101 EXT. TURKISH ENCAMPMENT - DANUBE PLAIN - NIGHT

101

The WAR TENTS of the Turkish encampment spike the sky. A stronghold of canvas and silk. The Sultan's Tent is pitched on a rise.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

Mehmed stands with General Omer and Bright-Eyes, overlooking his new possession: Transylvania.

MEHMED

Of all my lands, this one I love
the least.

BRIGHT-EYES

Their boys will be forged into
Janissaries. You will not leave
empty handed.

MEHMED

I was never going to.

General Omer stares at the horizon, confused:

GENERAL OMER

Look to the east. The sun. It
does not rise...

Where the sunrise should be, a STORM is gathering...

ON MEHMED. He realizes it isn't over.

TURKS ACROSS THE CAMP

Hear the HOWLING OF WOLVES broken by claps of THUNDER...
Bolts of LIGHTNING scar the night sky...

A TENT on the perimeter shakes violently... then COLLAPSES,
deflating. Sounds of MAYHEM as tents fall like dominoes...
Something is tearing a path into the heart of the camp...

Turkish SCREAMS rip from all sides... The SNAP of
splintering poles, cloth TEARING...

General Omer's gaze is drawn overhead... to flapping WINGS...
BOWMEN shoulder-to-shoulder CAREEN BACK --

A SWARM OF BATS pours over the tents... The Turks shield
their faces from the flying scourge, even as

VLAD HIMSELF

Emanates from the dark.

The bats TRANSMUTE from a thick BLACK FOG into VLAD'S VAMPIRE
BROOD. Insatiably thirsty.

Turks HACK WILDLY at opponents too fast to touch... The rare
Turk who scores a lucky HIT finds his blade has no effect.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: (2)

Most vampires wield the weapons they did in life, SLICING and CHOPPING to harvest the blood they crave... Others ALIGHT on screaming Turks to bear them down under claw and fang...

The army that toppled Constantinople RETREATS in chaos like panicked children.

But there is nowhere to go. The Vampires are everywhere, devouring.

A FLEEING TURK comes face to face with Cazan:

CAZAN

I used to think there were too many of you. Now there's not enough.

Cazan seizes the Turk and DRINKS.

VLAD

Sees Bright-Eyes standing like a rock in a river, parting the fleeing Turks around him. Waiting for him.

Bright-Eyes ATTACKS Vlad with a quick feint and slice -- Vlad CATCHES the blade. Twists it out of Bright-Eyes' hand.

VLAD

Where is my son?

BRIGHT-EYES

I do not fear death.

VLAD

Everybody does. I did.

Vlad PINS Bright-Eyes to a tent post with his own scimitar.

Bright-Eyes squirms, can't escape. He SCREAMS as a pack of vampires TEARS into him. In the end, afraid.

102 IN A SECURE TENT

102

The Peasant Boys chosen as future Janissaries. Among them, the RED-HAIRED BOY Vlad saved on Easter. The flaps part...

The Boys see RED EYES and shrink back... but Vlad emerges.

VLAD

Stay here. I'll get you back to your fathers soon enough.

Vlad continues his hunt to

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

THE STABLE

Vlad looks in:

Mehmed slices open SACK after SACK of SILVER COINS... from wagons laden with treasure from Castle Dracula.

Hundreds of thousands of silver coins SPILL across the floor in a glittering carpet.

MEHMED

I did not tax you nearly enough.

Vlad hovers angrily. He feels the silver's heat. How did Mehmed know?

VLAD

Where is he?

INGERAS' VOICE

Papa --

Vlad can hear his son calling from the GRANARY at the far end of the stable...

MEHMED

Waiting for you.

Vlad focuses his eyes on Mehmed's, reaching into his mind...

VLAD

Bring him here.

Mehmed squints, resisting Vlad's hypnotic stare.

MEHMED

Do you not think my will is stronger than poor Ismail's?

Mehmed FLICKS a coin at Vlad -- Vlad CATCHES it. Lets the silver SCALD his palm, staring Mehmed down.

IN THE SKY, the black clouds churn. The silver disrupts Vlad's power...

Cazan confronts Vlad, on edge.

CAZAN

Think about what you're doing.

Vlad ignores him and steps

103 INTO THE STABLE

103

It's like stepping into an oven. Vlad weathers the pain...
but feels his strength sap...

IN THE SKY, cracks in the clouds --

Cazan watches a SHAFT OF SUNLIGHT strike several vampires
caught in the open. Their Un-Dead flesh scorches...

Cazan bounds into a tent's protective SHADOW, eyes red slits.

CAZAN

You never listen.

104 IN THE STABLE

104

Mehmed circles like a tiger, slicing his sword in the air...

Vlad risks taking his eyes off Mehmed for a moment to glimpse
Ingeras in the granary...

MEHMED

Which one of us used to win these?
I don't remember...

VLAD

Yes you do.

The two swordsmen THRUST simultaneously. Mehmed's sword a
hair's breadth from Vlad's neck:

VLAD (cont'd)

Close. Just like Europe.

Vlad and Mehmed COLLIDE in a clang of steel. Every trick
they can remember, every dirty move they can dream up. Their
COMBAT reflected in SILVER all around them...

But the longer Vlad stays in here, the weaker he becomes...

Vlad DODGES -- but Mehmed was aiming at a SACK OF COINS. A
cascade of SILVER dumps on Vlad. His body SEARED --

MEHMED

How long can you bear it in here?

VLAD

Long enough to tear you out of the
history books.

Vlad counter-attacks with a devastating chain of sword
strokes. The onslaught forces Mehmed back...

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

Mehmed's SWORD is knocked away.

VLAD (cont'd)
I can still beat you as a man.

But Vlad's sword feels too heavy. He can no longer lift it.

MEHMED
You are not a man anymore.

Vlad falls. SMOLDERS on a bed of silver...

105 OUTSIDE, ACROSS THE TENT CITY

105

Wide swaths of SUN break through. Vampires are trapped in ever-shrinking pockets of SHADE... Emboldened Turks STAB at the cringing fiends from the safety of the sunlight...

106 IN THE STABLE

106

Mehmed picks up a WOODEN LANCE. Snaps it over his knee.

MEHMED
I'm told a stake through the heart
will kill you just as well. Much
cheaper.

Vlad pulls himself to his feet... as Mehmed THRUSTS the broken lance --

Vlad GRABS IT, barely keeping the tip from his heart --

MEHMED (cont'd)
You fight hard for your child. You
are not your father's son.

Mehmed puts his weight on the lance, he and Vlad, eye to eye:

MEHMED (cont'd)
He was toothless and wholly lacking
in majesty... yet thought of
himself as a dragon.
(pressing forward)
When you were born they called you
"Dracula." "Son of the Dragon."
And yet I have never heard you use
that name. Why should you?
(laughs)
To be known as the son of a coward.

Vlad's strength wavers. Sharp wood TOUCHES HIS HEART...

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

With a final burst of strength, Vlad pushes the lance aside and pulls Mehmed into him --

Vlad SINKS HIS FANGS into Mehmed's neck. DRINKS as Mehmed vainly struggles... Vlad's flesh HEALS.

Vlad hurls the still-living Mehmed into

THE GRANARY

Mehmed CRAWLS to a patch of sunlight...

As Vlad STALKS TOWARD Mehmed -- out of the silver -- Vlad's power reasserts itself and Mehmed's protective shaft of sun FADES AWAY...

VLAD

Dracula also means "Son of the Devil."

Pitiless RED EYES rise before Mehmed in the dark. They could swallow him whole. They cannot be escaped.

Vlad picks up the broken lance and JAMS it through Mehmed's chest.

Mehmed DIES gurgling.

Vlad approaches Ingeras, tied up on a bed of straw.

INGERAS

Papa...

Vlad senses they're not alone:

Brother Lucian raises a SILVER PLATTER as a shield.

VLAD

You told him how to kill me.

BROTHER LUCIAN

You would be the end of all of us.

Vlad SWATS the platter AWAY -- Lucian shuts his eyes, ready for death --

But around Brother Lucian's neck is revealed his CROSS. It GLOWS WITH WHITE LIGHT.

Vlad SHRINKS BACK... Brother Lucian is amazed, RAISES the cross. White light goes SUPERNOVA.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED: (2)

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
My strength is the Lord's.

Ingeras sees his father bend in pain, as if an invisible stake were being twisted through his heart...

INGERAS
(to Brother Lucian)
Stop it.

Brother Lucian unties Ingeras with his free hand...

BROTHER LUCIAN
(to Ingeras)
Come with me.

107 EXT. TURKISH ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

107

Brother Lucian leads Ingeras OUTSIDE...

The sky is BLACK as night. The last Turks fight in vain. Vampires released from their prisons of shadow move like a plague of locusts, leaving nothing living behind.

Lucian tries to ignore the bleak tableau spread before him...

Ingeras fights back tears.

BROTHER LUCIAN
(to Ingeras)
Don't cry. You're sheltered from every evil.

Brother Lucian looks helplessly at the frightened boy... and the horror surrounding them...

The light of Lucian's cross FLICKERS as his faith wavers...

BROTHER LUCIAN (cont'd)
(eyes shut, prays)
Christ Almighty, preserve this child.

HOWLS OF DEATH fill his ears. There is no reprieve coming.

CLOSE ON LUCIAN, overtaken by despair. The CROSS' light is EXTINGUISHED in Lucian's doubting hand.

Vlad nears...

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

VLAD
 (re: God)
 He's deaf to your prayers.
 Something I learned long ago.

Brother Lucian slumps in a defeated heap.

Vlad tenderly holds his son, who is calmed by his father's touch. Vlad is lost in the moment. Nothing else matters.

VLAD (cont'd)
 (to Ingeras)
 I'm here.

Cazan APPROACHES.

VLAD (cont'd)
 You old goat.

CAZAN
 I don't feel old.

Vlad and Cazan grasp forearms in victory.

VLAD
 You're cold...

CAZAN
 It must be the blood that makes
 them warm.

Vlad gazes across the ravaged Turkish Camp.

VLAD
 How many are left?

CAZAN
 (off Lucian and Ingeras)
 The only living things here are
 them.

Vampires have accumulated around Vlad like vultures...

VLAD
 What about the boys?

CAZAN
 Boys?

108 IN THE SECURE TENT

108

The Transylvanian Boys taken to be Janissaries lie DEAD...

109 VLAD

109

Feels a rush of horror. Looks around him. Vampires' mouths are fresh with dark BLOOD. The blood of their own sons.

VLAD
Stop this.

CAZAN
What have I taught you? What have I repeated over and over since you were a boy?

More vampires DRAW CLOSER... All drawn to the child at Vlad's side...

CAZAN (cont'd)
All that matters is a Prince's duty to his people.

Cazan rivets his RED EYES on Ingeras:

CAZAN (cont'd)
Don't you realize? They're all our enemies now.

An Eager Vampire LUNGES at Ingeras --

Vlad grabs a discarded SPEAR, JAMS it into the vampire.

VLAD
Know your place.

Vlad SNAPS off the metal point in the vampire's chest -- then drives the broken wood THROUGH its chest again, this time into the HEART --

The vampire crumples into a final death, twisting like a marionette with strings pulled in all directions.

Vlad guides INGERAS to Lucian, who holds the boy close. Vlad swings the lance around, guards them with his body.

VLAD (cont'd)
Stay away from my son.

CAZAN
When he's gone, you'll be free.

Cazan POUNCES. Vlad THRUSTS his broken spear at Cazan --

Cazan SPLINTERS it with his fist. Grabs Vlad by the throat... Vlad and Cazan WRESTLE in a titanic struggle...

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

CAZAN (cont'd)
Love will lead you to ruin.

Locked in combat, Vlad's eyes meet Cazan's.

VLAD
You forget who I am.

Vlad PLUNGES a broken TENT POLE through Cazan's heart and hoists him up... Cazan's scream ends abruptly as his body contorts in the rictus of absolute death.

A mass of vampires CONVERGE on Ingeras...

Vlad FIGHTS them off with broken spears... but realizes he can't stop them all... Realizes, at last, his path is still his to choose.

VLAD (cont'd)
It's over.

Vlad COMMANDS the clouds to EVAPORATE. DAYLIGHT starts punching through --

SHAFTS OF LIGHT rake the Turkish camp --

Vlad and the encroaching vampires IGNITE under the wrath of the sun, still locked in combat.

Brother Lucian shelters Ingeras from a storm of cinders as the Un-Dead Brood BURNS...

Vlad battles what looks like an ARMY OF FIRE. The immolated figures press the attack -- ruby-hot swords wielded by flaming limbs. Vlad slashes through the blazing monsters... They curse him as their tongues burn.

The sun shines through the smoke and ash as Vlad defeats the last of the fiery Un-Dead...

Vlad's body is itself wrapped in flame, fiercely consuming itself... He holds himself together a moment longer through sheer will...

VLAD (cont'd)
(to Brother Lucian)
Look after him.

As Vlad gazes at his son one last time... he falls into a blazing mass.

Lucian cradles the child in his arms.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED: (2)

109

We hear INGERAS' VOICE reflecting back:

INGERAS (V.O.)
The Turks never came back. They
never reached the capitals of
Europe.

VLAD'S ASHES remain in a fragile silhouette... as if the wind
itself were afraid to disturb them.

110 INT. GREAT HALL - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

110

A cloth is draped over Vlad's PORTRAIT by Workers, lest they
look into its eyes. The masked portrait is removed from its
place beside its Father...

INGERAS (V.O.)
Prince Vlad Dracula was a hero.

111 INT. FORGE

111

CLOSE ON a bucket of SILVER COINS poured into a molten
soup... Hundreds of Vlad's faces melt.

The liquid silver is pressed into molds. The new currency of
Transylvania bears the face of no king, only the symbol of
its Savior. A cross.

INGERAS (V.O.)
But there are no pictures or
statues of him.

112 EXT. BORGO PASS - SUNSET

112

As the SETTING SUN dips under the Carpathian Range, a blood-
tinged mist hovers over the Monastery ruins...

INGERAS (V.O.)
I don't even know where he was
buried.

A shadowy figure approaches...

It's SHKELGIM. His eyes shining with madness.

113 EXT. PEASANT FARM - DUSK

113

Dusk sweeps across fields of grain...

INGERAS (V.O.)
Our land is at peace.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

We see a CROSS newly carved into the door of a humble PEASANT HOME...

114 INT. THRONE ROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

114

INGERAS sits on the THRONE. His feet can't reach the ground. He's attended by Brother Lucian.

Assembled BOYARS swear allegiance on bended-knee.

INGERAS (V.O.)

I know my father loved me very
much...

Ingeras thoughtfully touches his mother's crucifix, hanging around his neck... He looks out the window, into the night.

INGERAS (V.O.)

But I pray I never see him again.

THE END