

BLADE

by

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Darkness, BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAMS. Presentation credits roll as we
FADE UP ON:

INT. HOSPITAL, INNER-CITY TRAUMA WARD - NIGHT

It's 1967, the Summer of Love and --

BOOM! Entry doors swing open as PARAMEDICS wheel in a FEMALE BLEEDER,
VANESSA (20s, black, nine months pregnant). She's deathly pale,
spewing founts of blood from a savagely slashed throat --

A SHOCK-TRAUMA TEAM swarms over her, inserting a vacutainer into an
artery to draw blood, wrapping a blood pressure cuff around her
arm --

NURSE #1

(with stethoscope)

She's not breathing!

SENIOR RESIDENT

Intubate her!

The RESPIRATORY THERAPIST feeds an endotracheal tube down the woman's
ruined throat, attaches that to an Ambu bag --

RESIDENT

Blood-pressure's forty and falling --

The woman starts spasming violently. It takes three staff members
just to hold her down.

SENIOR RESIDENT

Jesus, her water's broken --
(calling for help)

She's going into uterine contractions --

CAMERA PUSHES IN on the woman as she bolts upright, SCREAMING to wake the dead. We PLUNGE INTO the darkness of her mouth and find ourselves --

INSIDE HER BLOODSTREAM

The sound of a HEART BEATING, pounding as we whip-snake through --

CORPUSCLES

floating in amber plasma. Erythrocytes, leukocytes, neutrophils and eosinophils.

The rhythmic expansion of the artery walls, pulsing with each successive surge of blood as the HEART BEATS FASTER AND FASTER, taking us --

IN UTERO,

A CHILD, alive but unborn, shifting in a sea of amniotic fluid, surrounded by the white, protective substance known as vernix caseosa. The HEARTBEAT races like a locomotive now. The unborn child shifts, turns its head towards us --

-- and opens its eyes.

CUT TO:

A SWORDBLADE

cleaving the darkness, radiant light slicing across gleaming Damascus steel. Words acid-etched in the weapon's fine-tempered surface:

BLADE

Main credits end.

EXT. INNER CITY, INDUSTRIAL GHETTO - NIGHT

A decaying no man's land populated by condemned buildings and HUNGRY HOMELESS. Steam rises from manhole covers, drifting across the litter-lined streets. Suddenly --

A black Mercedes 850 appears over the crest of a hill, ROARING past us, stereo system belting out FILTER.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

Raquel, a wasp-wasted woman, sits behind the wheel. 20s, rich, sickeningly attractive. Hungry eyes.

Squirming around in the passenger seat is DENNIS, a model/actor boy-toy with a sub-zero IQ and a "fuck me sideways" grin.

DENNIS

So where we going?

RAQUEL

It's a surprise.

DENNIS

I likes surprises.

Raquel eyeballs Dennis -- "if looks could devour".

RAQUEL

What do you have down there, little man?

DENNIS

Heat-seeker.

RAQUEL

I'll bet.

Raquel slides a manicured hand up his thigh, squeezes his groin. Dennis MOANS. She pulls her hand away, downshifts.

EXT. VACANT LOT - NIGHT

The 850 threads a narrow alley into a vacant lot, BRAKES hard. Raquel and Dennis climb out. She leads him into --

EXT. MEAT PACKING PLANT - NIGHT

Industry never sleeps, and certainly not this grisly facility. Raquel leads Dennis around the back of the plant, where a host of WORKERS are loading refrigerated trucks with product.

DENNIS

What the fuck are we doing here?

Raquel just smiles, heads on into the plant via a loading door. The workers ignore her.

INT. MEAT PACKING PLANT - NIGHT

Dennis follows Raquel through the bowels of the plant, catching glimpses here and there of carcasses being rendered or hacked apart.

Through one partially open door we see what might be a line of BODYBAGS being trundled into the back of a truck via a hook and chain pulley-system. But Dennis doesn't have enough time to be disturbed by the vision, because he's being pulled away by Raquel, led down --

A STAIRWELL

We are in the basement now. At the end of the hall is a steel door, with perhaps, just the faintest HINT OF MUSIC heard coming from beyond. Raquel knocks.

A "peep-hole" slat opens and a BLACK LIGHT shines into Raquel's eyes.

A VOICE behind the door offers a verbal challenge, speaking a language we've never heard, laced with a devilish cadence.

Raquel responds in kind. The door opens. Raquel gives Dennis a knowing wink, enters. Dennis follows.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Raquel and Dennis move past a hulking DOORMAN, making their way down a narrow stairway. Dennis is suitably impressed.

THE CLUB

is elite, underground -- an "abattoir-chic" version of an old-time juke joint with a greasy, dangerous vibe. White-tiled walls and floors for easy hosing, chromed fittings, run-off gutters, drains. No bar.

BODIES

writhe on the strobe-lit dance floor. A heavy S&M scene. Leather. Latex. Tattoos. Body-piercings.

A D.J. wearing head-mounted spotlights orchestrates the tunes on twin-decks. MUSIC assaults us -- a beat so heavy it could jar the fillings from your teeth. Brutal "DARKCORE" along the lines of Prodigy or Underground.

Raquel pulls Dennis out onto the dance floor. They sway.

A lupine-featured GAULTIER GIRL with a streak of white running through her raven hair moves in behind Dennis, pressing up against him. Rachel Williams as the Angel of Death -- we'll call her MERCURY.

Mercury flicks her tongue against Dennis' ear -- it's been pierced with a silver post which clicks against her teeth. Tattooed across her back in black is a swirling, tribal vortex.

Dennis is now sandwiched between Raquel and Mercury, the three of them dry-humping their way to every man's glory.

The beat gets LOUDER. The action heavier. The atmosphere more narcotic. People are stripping off their clothes, sweating like fiends. It's a virtual orgy.

Dennis laughs, reveling in the hedonism. Everything rises to a fever pitch --

DENNIS

(over the music)

Fuck, I need a drink!!!

Raquel just smiles -- then Dennis notices a DROP OF SOMETHING spatter his hand. It looks like blood. Dennis looks up, concerned --

-- MORE BLOOD DROPLETS are falling. Raquel's face is sprinkled with them now. Dennis stops dancing. What is this? Some kind of fucked up

performance art?

Raquel turns her face toward the ceiling, as if washing herself in a summer shower, now the other club goers are looking up too --

BLOOD SHOWERS DOWN

from sprinkler heads in the ceiling, drenching the dancers. The club goers love it, thrusting their heads back, mouths open wide to receive the crimson offering.

Horrified, Dennis recoils, turning towards --

RAQUEL,

whose face morphs into a preternatural snarl. Her canines extend, tapering to razor-sharp points. Her tongue flicks, lizard-like as fingernails sharpen into claws. All this while the whites of her eyes BLEED RED, pupils oscillating hypnotically.

RAQUEL

What's wrong, baby?

Dennis SCREAMS, pushes away from Raquel, only --

-- Mercury has fangs now too. In fact, everyone in the club does, with the exception of poor Dennis. That's because they're all vampires.

Dennis tries to run, but the burly Doorman blocks his exit, brutally smashing his fist into Dennis' face.

Dennis falls, dazed. The club-goers close in around him. They make a game of it, shoving him from one person to another, their pale faces leering like twisted jack-o-lanterns.

The strobe lights quicken to a seizure-inducing intensity. Dennis spins, tumbling into Raquel's arms. She shoves him forward -- Dennis lands on the floor, falling at someone's boot-clad feet. He looks up. A DARK FIGURE sits in the shadows, unnoticed until this moment. The figure stands, moves into the light as time screeches to a halt --

A BLACK MAN,

towers above Dennis, wearing dark glasses and a leather longcoat -- a sneer of cruel contempt etched upon a face tempered by a lifetime of horror. His name is BLADE.

Blade whips open his long coat, shrugging it off, revealing an arsenal of high-tech weapons strapped to his body:

6-point adjustable body armor, a modified CAR-15 assault rifle with an ultra-violet entry light, two Casull .454 revolvers, a "Demon" automatic cross-bow, a bandoleer of mahogany stakes, an Indian-style katar punching dagger -- and last, but certainly not least, his namesake -- a silver sword which is secured in a back-scabbard.

CLOSE ON BLADE

A gaze as cold and pitiless as a midnight sun. The vampire club-goers stare back. Nuclear silence. And then --

All hell breaks loose. With a SNARL, Raquel charges at Blade, moving at superhuman speed, practically a blur --

Blade draws his Casulls, FIRES in multiple directions --

MACRO BULLET SHOT

as a round roars through the air towards Raquel. A silver-tipped dum-dum bullet which explodes on contact.

WHAM! The round punches a fist-sized hole through Raquel's chest, continuing on into the vamp behind her! Vampire blood fountains. Both creatures tumble forward, their bodies liquefying into puddles of black oil which go gurgling down the run-off drains.

Blade continues FIRING, then -CLICK!- magazines empty. Next. He holsters the Casulls, swings up his assault rifle, calmly flicks on the UV entry light mounted above --

MERCURY

leaps twenty feet straight up into the air. We've never seen anything move so fast. She CRASHES through a glass skylight, disappearing into the night just as --

-- a shaft of blinding UV "sunlight" cuts across the vampires. They rear back, skin smoking from the light's corrosive effects. Blade opens FIRE, pumping round after round of wooden fragmentation bullets into the crowd -- vampire genocide.

The strobe lights flicker as the mayhem mounts. Some of the vampires try to flee, scurrying up the stairs, but the exit quickly becomes clogged with liquefying bodies --

-- then Blade's CAR-15 jams. The remaining club-goers see their opening, surge forward en masse --

Blade drops the rifle, reaches over his shoulder and -SCHINGGG!- unsheathes his sword with a double-handed grip.

THE SWORD

Four acid-etched feet of blood-soaked Damascus steel. An edge so sharp it could cleave a shadow in two.

Blade moves like lightning, hacking his way into TWO CHARGING VAMPIRES. Blade spins again, cuts ANOTHER VAMPIRE clean in half --

ON THE FAR END OF THE CLUB,

a LATEX-CLAD VAMP makes a break for it. Blade flings his sword, sending it spinning end over end -- THUNK! The sword punches into the

vampire's heart. The hellish creature convulses, dies.

Beat. Blade retrieves his sword, then senses --

SOMETHING BIG

rising up behind him. In a flash, Blade swings his sword downward, cutting off the vampire's right hand at the elbow. The severed limb falls to the floor --

-- but it doesn't slow the hulking creature down. It SLAMS into Blade. Blade flies backwards thirty feet, tumbling over tables, slamming into the rear wall so hard that plaster rains down from the ceiling.

Blade suddenly finds himself wrestling with a feral-faced six-foot-something nightmare named QUINN. The vampire rears back its head, jaws stretching wide. Every inch of his face is covered with ritual scarification patterns and Maori-like tribal tattoos.

Blade forces an elbow against Quinn's throat, trying to keep him at bay. With his other hand he reaches to his bandoleer, pulls out a stake -- CRUNCH! Blade shoves the stake through the vampire's larynx. Quinn gurgles, clutches at his throat.

Blade rolls out from under, unholsters the cross-bow secured to his leg. With a flick of a switch the arms of the bow -SNAP!- open, drawing the bow-string taut. Blade FIRES --

The bolt hits Quinn in the shoulder, throwing him backwards and nailing him to the wall. As Quinn reaches over with his other hand to pull out the stake --

Blade FIRES AGAIN. A second bolt slams into Quinn's other arm, effectively pinning him like a butterfly to a board.

UP ABOVE,

mounted in one of the corners, is a security camera. Blade fires a cross-bow bolt straight into the lens.

Blade strides over, placing his sword against Quinn's chest.

BLADE

Where is Deacon Frost?

Quinn glares, trying to speak, gagging on the stake still lodged in his trachea --

BLADE

Got something in your throat.

Blade yanks the stake free. The vampire laughs, air whistling through his ruined larynx.

QUINN

Fuck you, Day-walker, I ain't saying

shit --

BLADE

Frost.

Quinn responds with a slew of rapid-fire vampire invectives. Blade sees he's getting nowhere fast, calmly sheathes his sword. He unclips a white phosphorous grenade from his combat harness --

QUINN

You won't stop him, Blade. The Tide's rising, the Sleeper's gonna --

Blade shoves the grenade in Quinn's mouth, pulls the pin. WHOOSH! Quinn goes up like a roman candle. Blade turns, surveying his work, ignoring the howling pyre behind him:

All evidence of the vampires is gone -- with the exception of a few oily-black puddles. Clothes, jewelry -- it's all been burned away by the acidic process of the creatures' accelerated decomposition.

DENNIS sits huddled in a corner, having pissed his pants. As Blade approaches, he cringes back --

DENNIS

Please don't --

Blade simply grabs Dennis by the jaw, tilting his head upward, rotating it from side to side -- looking for bite marks. There aren't any.

Blade moves on, leaving Dennis alone amidst the carnage. As Blade starts up the stairs, he pauses in mid-step --

A COCKROACH

scurries out from underfoot.

Blade adjusts his footfall, sparing the roach. He continues on up the stairs, disappearing in the smoky haze.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY HOSPITAL, AUTOPSY ROOM - NIGHT

CAMERA FOLLOWS a bagged corpse as it's rolled into the autopsy room by an ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT

Brought you a baked potato, nice and crispy. Still warm, too.

CURTIS WEBB, the forensic pathologist (30s, white bread, a little on the smarmy side) steps forward, unzips the bag --

It's Quinn, what's left of him, anyway. Burnt to a charcoal briquette, limbs twisted horribly, oozing fluids.

Curtis turns his head, grimacing, wafting the air.

CURTIS

Jesus, that's rank --

Curtis turns back, makes note of the blackened stump where Quinn's arm used to be, the ruined throat --

CURTIS

What's his story?

ASSISTANT

Paramedics said he was still screaming when they found him. Looks like some joker had stapled him to a wall.

CURTIS

Pretty.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL, HEMATOLOGY LAB - NIGHT

MICROSCOPE POV

of a slide-mounted blood smear stained with Wright stain (blue ink). What we see is a collection of donut-shaped pink things (red blood cells) intermingled with some small blue specks (platelets) and the occasional larger, light-blue blobs (white blood cells).

KAREN JANSEN (20s), a fine-featured hematologist with a social life in suspended animation, sits back from the microscope, stumped. Next to her is JULIE WHITAKER, a cheerful chemtech.

KAREN

You took this off a DOA?

Curtis sits on a stool nearby, slowly nodding.

KAREN

This isn't human blood.

CURTIS

Then what is it?

KAREN

I don't know --
(re: microscope)
Look at this blood smear --

Curtis takes a look for himself.

KAREN

The red blood cells are biconvex, which is theoretically impossible. They're hypochromic, there's virtually

no hemoglobin in them.
(shaking her head)
Look at the PMNs, they're binucleated,
they should be mononucleated.

CURTIS

What about the chemistry panel?

Karen looks to Julie, who reaches for a computer print-out.

JULIE

Blood sugar level is three times the
norm, phosphorous and uric acid are
off the scales.

(shrugs)

Like the woman said, impossible.

Karen removes her glasses, rubbing the bridge of her nose.

KAREN

Curtis, it's three in the morning. I'm
really not in the mood for one of your
practical jokes.

CURTIS

(insistent)

It's not a joke. I've got the stiff
sitting in the morgue right now --
look, just come up and see him, okay?
Five minutes, that's all I ask.

KAREN

I thought you promised to give me some
distance?

CURTIS

This is purely professional curiosity,
Karen, I swear.

Karen rolls her eyes, lets loose a tired sigh.

KAREN

Five minutes, not a second more. And I
don't want to hear a word about "us".

CURTIS

No problem.

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - NIGHT

The dead of night, not a mouse in the house. Curtis and Karen, each
garbed in a mask, stand on either side of Quinn's body, which now
rests on the autopsy table.

QUINN'S BODY

A preliminary exploratory Y-incision has been made across the chest,

stretching from shoulder to shoulder, then continuing on down the abdomen. Ribs and cartilage have been cut open to expose the heart and lungs.

KAREN

You haven't started in on the internal organs?

CURTIS

Just the blood sample from the pericardial sac.

Curtis pauses, studying Quinn's disfigured face -- the features seem much less damaged now -- almost as if the corpse were healing itself.

CURTIS

That's weird --

KAREN

What?

CURTIS

He looks different now, burns are less extreme, some of these wounds have closed up --

Curtis pulls out a penlight, flicks it on. He leans over Quinn, shining the light into one of his eyes.

CURTIS

Tell me something, honestly, you ever have second thoughts about us?

KAREN

(grudgingly)
Sometimes --

Curtis looks up from the corpse, grinning beneath his mask.

KAREN

-- but then I remember what an ass-hole you were and I'm snapped back to reality.

CURTIS

Jesus, Karen, you're breaking my heart here --

Quinn suddenly bolts up from the autopsy table, sinking his fangs into Curtis' jugular. He snaps the man's neck in two for easier access, sucking in blood like a living vacuum.

Karen stumbles backwards, sending autopsy tools CLATTERING.

QUINN

rises from the table, flinging Curtis' twitching body aside. He curls

his blood-soaked lips back, baring viper-like fangs, emitting a
GUTTURAL GROWL --

QUINN

(crazed by thirst)

-- more -- blood --

Karen backs into the corpse drawers, but Quinn is upon her in a half-second, wrapping a hand about her throat. His mouth opens/morphs disturbingly wide as if to swallow her head whole, caustic saliva dripping from his canines --

Karen tries to turn her head away, but Quinn's grip is vise-like. She finds herself staring into his eyes -- pupils pulsing rapid-fire, opening and closing, hypnotic --

As Quinn sinks the tips of his fangs into Karen's carotid artery and starts to nurse --

BANG!!! A load of MAHOGANY buckshot chews into Quinn's side. He HOWLS in pain. Another load catches him full in the face. He drops Karen. She falls to the floor --

KAREN'S POV

The sound of RUSHING BLOOD pounding through her skull. Everything spinning. She struggles to move, turns her head, finds herself eye to eye with Curtis' corpse.

ON QUINN

rising, his face torn up, smoking. WHIP PAN TO --

BLADE,

standing at the entrance to the morgue, a streetsweeper auto-shotgun in hand, sizing Quinn up.

BLADE

Now don't we look dapper?

Quinn BELLOWS with rage, ripping one of the heavy steel refrigeration doors from its hinges, flinging it at Blade like it was lawn furniture --

Blade rolls to the side as the door CRASHES against the wall. Quinn runs, moving through the morgue like a human tornado, heading for the windows at the end of the room --

SMASH!!! Out goes Quinn, taking half the wall with him. Blade rushes to the decimated window, looks down --

BLADE'S POV

Quinn lands on the roof of an ambulance parked four stories below, caving it in. He springs off, loping across the tarmac on three limbs, then -SCREECH!-THWUMP!- rolling up onto the hood of an

oncoming car, before disappearing into the night --

BACK UP ABOVE,

Blade spins, SEES Karen bleeding her life away on the floor. She reaches a hand out to him, beseeching --

Blade pulls away from her grasp, takes a step towards the exit -- then hesitates.

A flicker of doubt washes across Blade's face. He looks down at Karen once more, wrestling with his conscience, finally making a decision. He kneels, scoops Karen up into his arms. Just then,

TWO POLICEMEN

rush into the morgue, weapons drawn --

UNIFORM #1

Hold it, ass-hole!

Blade ignores them, turning to face the window before him. It's a good thirty feet to the roof of the adjacent building, a parking structure -- and damned if Blade doesn't seem to be considering the jump.

The Police close in, agitated. Blade crouches, switches Karen to a one-handed grip --

UNIFORM #1

I said hold it!!!

-- and jumps.

EXT. HOSPITAL/ROOFTOP PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

Blade clears the impossible distance -- almost. He snags the ledge of the adjacent parking structure with his left hand even as Karen slips from the grasp of his right --

-- a last-second save, his fingers clamping around her wrist, is all that stands between Karen and street pizza. She SCREAMS anyway, dangling below him --

Blade GRUNTS, swinging Karen like a pendulum, heaving her up and over the ledge as if she were a sack of potatoes. She lands on her shoulder, clutching it in pain --

Blade heaves himself up, crouching beside her.

KAREN

(gasping)

My shoulder -- dislocated --

Blade places a hand on her shoulder, another around her elbow and without any consideration to discomfort -CRACK!- brutally pops it back in place. Karen SCREAMS again as he scoops her up once more and

heads for --

HIS '69 OLDSMOBILE 442,

which is parked nearby. Midnight-black. The definitive high-performance heavy-metal muscle machine with an engine big enough to power an Apollo rocket.

INT. BLADE'S OLDS - NIGHT

Blade sets Karen down in the passenger seat, climbs behind the wheel, keys the ignition. The engine ROARS to life, belching fumes through the dual exhaust. Blade floors it, burning serious rubber as the Olds vanishes from sight.

BACK AT THE DEMOLISHED MORGUE WINDOW

as the two policemen stare numbly in open-mouthed astonishment.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Blade pilots the Olds down the streets, moving through a series of increasingly degenerating neighborhoods, coming at last to the sprawling warehouse district.

EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT

The Olds approaches a mammoth industrial facility that's been cordoned off by cyclone fencing and razor wire. Ultra-violet floodlights illuminate the area, while an army of security cameras keep a watchful eye.

INT. BLADE'S OLDS - NIGHT

Blade glances at Karen, cursing himself for giving into his emotions. He hits a remote secured to the sun visor --

EXT. BLADE'S OLDS/ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT

A gate grinds open.

We follow the Olds as it cruises around the back of the building, heading down a concrete loading ramp. At the bottom of the ramp, a heavy iron door rises. Blade's Olds disappears into the darkness.

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY, INDUSTRIAL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

More UV lights flicker on. We're in a massive loading elevator which HUMS as it ascends, eventually reaching its destination with a BOOMING CLANG. The doors at the rear glide open. Blade guides the Olds out.

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY, WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Set up in an old ironworks, the place looks like a cross between an

auto junkyard and an armory. Equipment is strewn everywhere -- lathes, mills, old furnaces, gutted vehicles, an ad hoc surgical theater -- all of it jerry-rigged in a brutal, oily-tech.

Blade climbs out of the Olds. He opens the passenger door and pulls Karen out, carries her in his arms.

BLADE

Whistler!

WHISTLER (O.S.)

Are we bringing home strays now?

ABRAHAM WHISTLER (60s)

hobbles out of the shadows, leaning heavily on a cane. Gimlet-eyed, bitter, his right leg encased in a metal brace. Though his face is lined with wrinkles and his hair has long since gone gray, we sense he could kick the living shit out of any man half his age.

BLADE

She's been bitten.

WHISTLER

You should've killed her, then.

BLADE

She hasn't turned yet.

(pointedly)

You can help her.

Blade and Whistler stare each other down. Finally, Whistler turns and heads over to the operating theater.

WHISTLER

No promises. You watch her close. She starts to turn, you finish her off.

Blade nods, lays Karen down on the operating table. Whistler turns on an overhead light. Karen is sheathed in sweat, ashen. She's lost a lot of blood.

Whistler snaps on a pair of surgical gloves, probes the wound in Karen's neck with an antiseptic swab -- there's capillary damage around the perimeter of the wound, the tissue looks bruised, gangrenous.

WHISTLER

Localized necrosis. She's borderline. Another hour and she'd be well into the change.

Whistler cracks open a smelling salt capsule and waves under Karen's nose. As she starts to stir --

WHISTLER

Can you hear me, woman?

Karen's eyes open wide. She's scared, disoriented --

KAREN

What -- ?

WHISTLER

You've been bitten by a vampire. We've got to try and burn out the venom, just like a rattlesnake bite --

Whistler reaches for a massive syringe filled with caustic-looking fluid. Karen sees the syringe, resists --

WHISTLER

Hold her.

Blade forces Karen back. Whistler readies the syringe.

WHISTLER

(reading her name tag)

"Dr. Karen Jansen". Listen close, I'm going to inject you with an antidote made from *allium setivum* -- garlic. This is going to hurt. A lot.

Whistler sinks the needle into Karen's neck and depresses the plunger. "Hurt" doesn't begin to describe what Karen experiences next. Imagine undergoing childbirth while someone pumps battery acid through your veins.

Karen SHRIEKS, her body going into uncontrolled paroxysms. The wound on her neck begins to smoke as the antidote attacks the poisonous vampire venom.

Karen clutches at Blade's arms, digging her nails in. She stares up at him with unflinching intensity, like a child desperately searching for assurance.

ON BLADE,

uncomfortable playing the roll of nursemaid. He'd like nothing more than to be done with this, but the only thing he can do is hold Karen while she rides out the seizures.

KAREN'S POV

growing darker by the moment. The last thing she sees is Blade staring down at her -- then the night closes in.

INT. HOUSE OF EREBUS, MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a monitor featuring footage taken at the vampire club massacre. Blade turns and stares into the camera, fires his cross-bow. The screen cuts to static.

A WITHERED, CLAWED HAND

moves into frame, holding a remote. With a tap of a button, the monitor goes dark.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL a large, minimalist conference room -- the House of Erebus, seat of the vampire race's legislative assembly.

Gathered around a massive table are the TWELVE VAMPIRE ELDERS, representing a "rainbow" of racial colors -- names like PALLINTINE, VON ESPER, ASHE, BAVA. Two of them, the FAUSTINAS, are identical twins -- lethal-looking women with alabaster skin.

Chilled carafes filled with blood are situated along the table. From time to time, a member will pour themselves a glass, or perhaps, help themselves to the bowls of human finger bones which serve as snacks.

At the head of the table is GAETANO DRAGONETTI, current vampire "Overlord". Blood-red eyes, parchment skin stretched over skull-like features. Incalculably ancient, but still deadly and virile as a viper.

Dragonetti speaks. He uses the "secret tongue" -- the ancient vampire language which utilizes consonants human vocal chords are incapable of reproducing.

DRAGONETTI

(subtitled)

Blade. Once again, our interests have fallen victim to his ridiculous crusade. He must be destroyed.

FROST (O.S.)

(in English)

You're wrong, Dragonetti.

All heads turn. Who would dare such impudence?

DEACON FROST,

a mere "Underlord" in the vampire hierarchy, steps forward. Strikingly handsome, younger, less conservative than his superiors, fueled with a passionate intensity. Amongst the vampire community he's known as an agitator. He's also the vampire equivalent of a racial supremacist.

FROST

The Day Walker represents a unique opportunity. We'd be fools to waste it by killing him.

DRAGONETTI

(subtitled, taking umbrage)

Deacon Frost. You refuse to speak our language, you insult the House of Erebus by using the humans' gutter-tongue, have you no respect for tradition?

FROST

Why should I respect something which
has outlived its purpose?

This causes quite a stir amongst the other vampires. Frost might as well have slapped Dragonetti in the face.

DRAGONETTI

(simmering)

I see. And what would you have us do
with this "half-breed"?

FROST

Study him. Unlock the secrets of his
DNA. He's the key we've been looking
for.

DRAGONETTI

He is an abomination!

Dragonetti slams his fist down, toppling a carafe, spilling blood
across the tabletop. Frost looks to the others --

FROST

Why should we spend our lives
cringing from the daylight when his
blood offers us an alternative?
Enough talk. It's time we stepped out
of the shadows!

Dragonetti looks apoplectic. ELDER PALLINTINE, a five-hundred year-
old vampire inhabiting the body of a prepubescent boy, interjects.

PALLINTINE

You're out of line, Frost.

FROST

Am I? Or am I just the first to say
out loud what we've all been
thinking?

The fact that no one answers is telling. Dragonetti glowers at the
other Elders, sensing the tide turning.

DRAGONETTI

The shadows suit us, Frost. We've
existed this way for thousands of
years. Who are you to challenge our
ways?

FROST

Someone who's sick of living off
scraps. The coming age belongs to us,
not the humans!

(to the others)

When the final war between our races

comes, who do you want leading the charge?

Frost stabs an accusing finger at the Overlord.

FROST

Some withered up fossil ready to snap like a brittle bone at the first sign of change?

Dragonetti GROWLS like an beast, raking his claws across the tyro vampire's face, knocking him to the ground.

DRAGONETTI

Get out!!!

Frost picks himself up, touches the gashes on his cheek. Looks at his fingers, licks the blood from them.

FROST

Careful, old fang. You might wake up one day and find yourself extinct.

Frost smiles at Dragonetti and calmly exits the room.

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP, BLADE'S CELL - DAY

ON KAREN as she comes to. Her wounds have been bandaged. She rises, a little shaky, takes in her surroundings -- She's in a spartan room, like a monk's cell. On the wall is a collection of knives and daggers. Some of them wooden, their hilts inscribed with bizarre-looking runes. In the center of these weapons rests --

BLADE'S SWORD,

hanging like a cross in a chapel, dominating all else. Karen touches it. Then her eyes drop to a silver locket which dangles from the hilt by a tarnished chain. She reaches for it, opens it --

The locket features a photo, old and faded. It's the black woman we saw in the prologue, Vanessa, standing in the sunshine.

Karen moves towards the door, cautious --

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

We hear VOICES now, coming from beyond a series of black-out curtains. Karen pushes one aside and SEES --

BLADE

strapped into some kind of Inquisition-esque restraint chair. His shirt is off, his body slick with sweat. Whistler finishes strapping Blade in, then stands back, holding up a gas-powered pistol injector, hesitant --

WHISTLER

I had to increase the dose. You're building up a resistance to the serum --

BLADE

(impatient)
Just do it, old man.

Whistler nods, fitting Blade with a bite guard. Then he presses the pistol-injector against Blade's carotid artery.

Blade shakes violently, grinding his teeth through the bite guard, veins cording in his neck. He clutches Whistler's hand, holding it tightly as he fights his way through the hellish seizure. To his credit, Whistler never lets go.

Mentor and student stare at one another as the mysterious serum runs its violent course. We understand that these shared moments, oddly private in their horror, are the glue which binds the two vampire hunters together. Finally, Blade slumps forward in his restraints, exhausted.

KAREN

She draws back, instinctively knowing that she's just witnessed something she shouldn't have. She looks for an exit, SEES another doorway. She makes for it --

INT. WHISTLER'S LAB - TANK ROOM - DAY

A dusty, darkened hole of a room, no windows, just shadows, crumbling concrete, rust stains, and --

A LARGE TANK

filled with swirling blood plasma, choked with electrical leads and biomedical sensors. SOMETHING floats within, suspended in the murky fluid -- a child, two or three years of age, drifting about like a medical oddity preserved in formaldehyde --

THUMP! The child SLAMS up against the glass. Karen backpedals, startled. Its eyes are open now, pupils blown. It snarls, revealing a mouthful of razored fangs, trailing mouth-slime across the glass as it futilely tries to chew its way through to Karen.

Karen stifles a sob, turning and running right into --

BLADE,

who now blocks the exit, sword in hand. Karen retreats a step, wary --

BLADE

You shouldn't be here.

KAREN

I'm sorry, I --

WHISTLER (O.S.)

Wandered off the beaten path, Doctor?

Whistler has entered the room from a second doorway. Karen looks from Whistler to Blade, trapped between them --

KAREN

Who are you people?

WHISTLER

My name is Abraham Whistler.
(re: Blade)
This is Blade. As for our little
homunculus here --

Whistler limps over to the tank, rapping his cane against it. The creature snaps at it reflexively, following the silver tip back and forth like a fish after a lure.

BLADE

-- he's a vampire.

KAREN

You're joking --

WHISTLER

Not at all. You're looking at a prime
specimen of the homines nocturna.

Whistler toys with the feral creature, engaging in a certain amount of sadistic delight as its efforts grow increasingly more frenzied. Suddenly, it surges towards the top of the tank, clawing at the lid --

Karen becomes alarmed -- but then a massive ELECTRICAL JOLT shocks the creature back into submission.

WHISTLER

If Blade hadn't brought you here, you
would've wound up like him.

Karen brings a hand to her bandaged neck, recalling the events of the previous night. She looks to Blade.

KAREN

Why did you help me?

Blade scowls, his gaze flickering to Whistler.

BLADE

Stupidity.

WHISTLER

(appraising her)
Maybe not. I did some checking, she's
a hematologist. Knowledge like that

might come in handy.

BLADE

It's not worth the risk. We can't trust her.

KAREN

Why?

BLADE

Because you're tainted. The venom's still inside you. You could still turn on us.

KAREN

What happens then?

Blade looks to Whistler -- as far as he's concerned, the debate's over.

BLADE

Then I have to take you out, just like any other bloodsucker.

Blade turns and exits. Whistler and Karen follow.

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Beyond the grimy outer windows, we can see that the day is closing -- long shadows, amber light. Karen lingers in the doorway, reeling from information overload.

Blade begins suiting up for his nightly hunt -- strapping on body armor, loading ammunition. He strings the tarnished locket around his neck as if it were an amulet that could ward off evil, then pauses to inspect a modified pistol, sighting down the length of it.

BLADE

We hunt them, moving from one city to the next, tracking their migrations. They're hard to kill. They tend to regenerate.

CLACK! Blade pulls the trigger on an empty chamber, then checks his next weapon --

KAREN

(sarcastic)

So what do you use, then? A stake?

WHISTLER

(nodding)

Some of the old wives' tales are true -- they're severely allergic to silver, various types of wood. Feed them garlic and they'll go into anaphylactic shock --

Whistler picks up a customized rifle with a UV entry light, flicking on the beam.

WHISTLER

-- and of course there's always
sunlight, ultra-violet rays.

Karen shakes her head, incredulous --

KAREN

And you honestly expect me to believe
all this?

BLADE

I don't care what you believe. I
saved your life once, I don't plan on
making a habit of it. You want my
advice, you'll be out of the city by
nightfall. If you're stupid enough to
stay, that's your business.

KAREN

I can't just leave. I have a life
here, a career --

BLADE

Not anymore. You've seen one of them.
You won't be allowed to live after
that.

Karen stares at Blade. Whistler gestures to the windows --

WHISTLER

There's a war going on out there.
Blade, myself, a few others -- we've
tried to keep it from spilling over
onto the streets.

(beat)

Sometimes people like yourself get
caught in the cross-fire.

Whistler shrugs. As far as he's concerned, there's nothing else to
say. Karen is still protesting, though.

KAREN

I can go to the police. I have blood
samples back at the hospital. I can
show them.

BLADE

Do it. You'll be dead before you can
file the complaint.

KAREN

That's ridiculous! No one's that
powerful.

Whistler sighs. He doesn't suffer fools gladly.

WHISTLER

You're talking about a brotherhood that predates the Catholic Church by thousands of years. Their survival depends on their ability to blend in. Chances are, you've encountered them and not even known it. On the subway, in a bar --

Blade slings his CAR-15 onto his shoulder, impatient. He starts towards the Olds, gesturing.

BLADE

Get in. You're leaving.

WHISTLER

Wait.

Whistler tosses a small metal canister to Karen.

WHISTLER

Consider it a parting gift. Vampire mace -- silver nitrate, essence of garlic.

KAREN

(in disbelief)

So that's it? You guys just patch me up and send me on my way?

WHISTLER

There is one other thing. I'd buy yourself a gun if I were you. If you start becoming sensitive to the daylight, if you start becoming thirsty regardless of much you've had to drink -- then I suggest you take that gun and use it on yourself. Better that, than the alternative.

Karen stares at Whistler, horrified, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. THE VAMPIRE ARCHIVES - DAY

We are deep in the narrow stacks of a sepulchral archive. Exactly what and where this place is will become more clear later on.

But for now, the CAMERA DRIFTS through the warren of aisles. Along the way, we catch a glimpse of a HULKING SILHOUETTE cowering behind a series of Japanese shoji screens. Later on, we find --

FROST

tucked away in a carrel, surrounded by books and scriptures, with only the SICKLY GLOW of his laptop to provide light.

DRAGONETTI (O.S.)

What are you doing here?

Frost pauses, SEEING Dragonetti emerge from the shadows.

DRAGONETTI

(outraged)

These archives are restricted to members of the House of Erebus.

FROST

Please. You and the other Elders wouldn't know what to do with these texts if your lives depended on it.

(cryptically)

Which, of course, they do.

DRAGONETTI

You're wasting your time, Frost. Far greater scholars than you have tried to decipher these words. Whatever secrets they hold have been lost.

FROST

Perhaps.

Frost studies Dragonetti, a self-satisfied grin on his face. If the act was intended to unnerve Dragonetti, it succeeded, though the ancient vampire would never admit it.

DRAGONETTI

What are you up to, Frost?

Frost shuts the lid on his laptop, rising, drawing intimidatingly close to Dragonetti.

FROST'S VOICE

Wouldn't you like to know, Old Fang?

A beat as the young turk stares his elder down. Dragonetti is the first to lose his nerve. Frost smiles and exits, leaving the old vampire to lick his wounds.

CAMERA DRIFTS back to the hulking silhouette, which has been eavesdropping on the conversation. It quivers in fear.

INT. BLADE'S OLDS (ON KAREN'S STREET CORNER) - DAY

Blade brings the car to a stop. Karen looks at him. His eyes are hidden behind his glasses, his expression stone.

BLADE

Remember what we said. Keep your eyes

open. They're everywhere.

EXT. KAREN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

As Karen climbs out, Blade swings the door shut behind her. The Olds ROARS off down the quiet residential street.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, LOBBY - DAY

Karen crosses the lobby, stepping into an elevator. Just as the doors are closing, a WOMAN and TWO MEN duck in alongside her.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Silence, the uncomfortableness of an elevator ride magnified tenfold. Karen can FEEL the eyes of her fellow passengers upon her. Finally succumbing to paranoia, she hazards a glance -- would she be able to tell if these people weren't human? The woman turns to Karen, smiles --

Karen surreptitiously fishes the "vampire mace" from her pocket, clutching it -- and now one of the men turns to look at her, nodding --

INT. KAREN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

The elevator doors open. Karen hurries out, heads left, finds herself in a deserted hallway. She looks back --

-- then skips a heartbeat as the trio also step out! As Karen raises the canister of mace --

-- the trio turn and head down to the right. Karen breathes a sigh of relief, shakes her head.

INT. KAREN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Karen enters quickly, bolting the door behind her. She picks up the phone, dials 911 --

KAREN

I need the police. This is an emergency --

As Karen waits to be connected, she moves to the back entrance and checks the locks -- then the windows, then the fire escape -- finally, a VOICE comes on the other end.

KAREN

Hello? My name is Karen Jansen, I was with Curtis Webb at Mid-Town Hospital last night -- that's right, I witnessed the attack --

(listening)

115 Aurora, apartment 3G. Yes, I'll wait here. Please hurry.

Karen hangs up the phone and turns --

A SHAFT OF BRIGHT SUNLIGHT

streams in through a window. Karen forces herself to look at it and winces, shielding her eyes. Again, she brings a hand to the bandaged wound on her neck. She moves to the window, pulling the shade down, frightened.

KAREN

Get a grip on yourself, girl.

She sinks down into a chair to wait, setting Whistler's vampire mace aside. Then she shuts her eyes, massaging her temples. We SEE --

A BRIEF FLASH OF

Quinn, his mouth opening wide, saliva dripping from his fangs. His pupils pulsating hypnotically. We rush into his gaping maw and --

WHAM! We're back to reality. Karen wakes with a start, looks to the windows -- time has passed, it's getting dark outside --

-- and someone is KNOCKING at the front door. Karen reaches for the vampire mace, then moves to the door. She looks through the peephole, cautious --

KAREN

Who is it?

KAREN'S POV (FISH-EYE)

A POLICE OFFICER stands in the hallway -- 30s, handsome, a knight in shining armor as far as she's concerned.

GIDEON

Sergeant Gideon. I'm responding to a 911 call.

Karen visibly relaxes. She opens the door and steps aside, allowing Gideon to enter.

KAREN

Yes, that was me, I'm Karen Jansen --

Gideon smiles, takes a quick glance around the room, then studies Karen's face, the bandages on her neck.

GIDEON

Are you all right?

(off Karen's nod)

I'm glad you called, Ms. Jansen, we've been anxious to get a hold of you. You disappeared on us for a while.

KAREN

I know. Listen -- do you have any idea

what happened to Curtis, the other doctor?

GIDEON

(matter of fact)

Oh, he's dead. But I wouldn't worry about that if I were you.

KAREN

(alarmed)

Why?

Gideon's smile vanishes as he unholsters his gun.

GIDEON

Because you're dead too.

Karen GASPS. She has a half-second to act -- in which she triggers a spray of vampire mace into Gideon's face. Gideon stumbles back, blinded, cursing, rubbing the heel of his palm against his eyes --

Karen expects pyrotechnics -- but the end result is little more than an annoyance. A second later, Gideon is simply blinking, sniffing his fingers, confused --

GIDEON

Garlic?

KAREN

He said it would work against vampires --

Gideon bursts out laughing.

GIDEON

Who said I was a vampire?

Gideon shakes his head, still snickering. He forces Karen against the wall, placing the gun against her head --

GIDEON

Thanks for the laugh. You can shut your eyes if you want to.

CRASH!!! The front door explodes open as Blade comes flying through it!

Gideon tries to bring his pistol up -- but Blade grips the man's hand and squeezes. Gideon SCREAMS as his bones snap like kindling. The pistol falls from his grasp --

Blade fires his fist into Gideon's gut again and again, then flings the officer across the room, sending him SMASHING into a glass-cased cabinet. Bleeding, battered, Gideon struggles to stand --

Blade is all over him, kicking the shit out of the rogue cop until he sinks to the floor in a half-conscious haze.

Blade stands over Gideon's limp form, fists clenched, breathing heavily, touching down after his adrenaline high. Finally, he looks to Karen --

BLADE

You okay?

Karen nods, glances at Gideon --

KAREN

How did you know?

BLADE

Figured they'd send someone after you. Thought I'd wait around and see who showed up.

KAREN

You used me as bait?!

BLADE

It worked, didn't it?

KAREN

But, he could've --

BLADE

He didn't. Get over it.

Blade kneels next to Gideon. He turns the man's head, inspects the neck, the skin behind the ear --

KAREN

But he's a policeman --

BLADE

He's a familiar. A human who works for the vampires. See this mark?

Blade pushes aside Gideon's hair, revealing a tiny, cryptic symbol tattooed into the man's scalp.

BLADE

That's a glyph, kind of like a vampire cattle brand. That means Officer Friendly here is someone's property. Any of the other vampire's try to bleed him, they'll have to answer to Friendly's owner --

(studying the glyph)

This glyph belongs to Deacon Frost. We've been tracking him for a while now --

KAREN

Why in God's name would anyone want to

work for them?

BLADE

Because they're vampire wanna-bes. If they're loyal, if they prove themselves, then their masters will turn them.

KAREN

And that's a good thing?

BLADE

For some. Live forever, never get old. The ultimate high.

Just then, Gideon MOANS. Blade drags the man up so they're eye to eye.

BLADE

How 'bout you, Officer? You a good little bloodhound?

CUT TO:

EXT. KAREN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DUSK

Blade and Karen are now standing by Gideon's police cruiser which is parked outside Karen's apartment. Blade shoves Gideon against the hood of the cruiser. He finds Gideon's keys, moves to the trunk, opens it --

IN THE TRUNK --

A sophisticated medical cooling unit for transporting organs. Blade opens the unit, coolant vapor hisses out. Inside are plastic bags containing blood.

BLADE

Looks like our friend was blood-running.

(to Gideon)

Where were you headed?

Gideon mumbles through a split lip and chipped teeth --

GIDEON

Mphuck you --

WHAM! Blade plants Gideon's face into the hood of the car. Gideon GROANS, coughs --

GIDEON

Jesus -- 1227 Brookner --
Holliston Clinic --

Blade releases him, then reaches for his Casull.

KAREN

What are you doing?!

BLADE

Preventive medicine.

Karen steps in front of Blade, shielding Gideon.

KAREN

You can't do this, he's human, it's murder.

BLADE

It's war, now get the fuck out of the way!

Karen grabs Blade's arm, wrestling with him, trying to push his hand away. As the two of them struggle, Gideon makes a break for it, stumbling across the lawn. Blade pushes Karen aside, takes aim, **FIRES --**

-- but Gideon ducks into an alley, disappearing from sight. Blade spins on Karen, enraged --

BLADE

God-damnit!!! Do you have any idea what you just did?! He'll warn them. They'll be waiting!

But Karen's defiant, she's not backing down.

KAREN

You were going to kill him. What was I supposed to do?! Shut my eyes and pretend I didn't see what I saw?

Blade tears off his glasses. Karen gasps --

BLADE'S EYES

aren't human, nor are they vampire. They're something else -- emerald green, laced with swirling flecks of red.

BLADE

Let me set you straight on something, Doctor. What you've "seen" so far is nothing. The world you live in's just the sugar-coated topping. There's another world beneath it, the real world -- and it's a fucking bloodbath. If you want to survive in it, you'd better pull your head out of your ass.

Blade slips his glasses back on, leaving Karen shocked into silence. He heads for his Olds without looking back, climbs in, guns the engine. In seconds, he's gone, tearing off down the street in a cloud of exhaust.

EXT. EDGEWOOD TOWERS, PENTHOUSE - DUSK

We are soaring through the air above the gleaming city skyline, moving towards the Edgewood Towers whose windows reflect the blood-red sinking sun.

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE, POOL - NIGHT

Suffused lighting, elegant tile-work featuring evocative mosaics, the quiet strains of CLASSICAL MUSIC --

MERCURY,

the lupine Gaultier girl from the club, glides beneath the water, surfacing at the deep end. We SEE --

FROST

lounging in a chair, studying a laptop which rests beside him. On the screen is a digitized image -- a page taken from an ancient manuscript, written in a secret tongue.

Officer Gideon waits nearby, cradling his ruined hand, his battered face cast downward like a boy who's been called into the Principal's office.

GIDEON

Look, I know you're disappointed --

FROST

Crestfallen.

GIDEON

Blade was waiting for me. There wasn't anything I could do.

Frost nods, lapsing into brooding contemplation.

FROST

Tell me something, Gideon, what blood type are you?

Gideon hesitates. Is this a trick question?

GIDEON

I don't really know --

FROST

Take a wild stab. A? B? O, perhaps?
I'm interested in the antigens here,
the agglutination reaction --

Gideon stammers as Frost rises. In the blink of an eye, Frost lifts Gideon from the floor, dangling the Officer over the deep end of the pool by his throat --

FROST

I'm going to guess AB positive.

Gideon GURGLES as Frost's fingernails pierce his flesh, drawing blood. Then Frost releases him --

Gideon plunges into the pool. Mercury is on him in a heartbeat, tearing him apart like a Great White consuming a piece of chum. The water churns violently around them, clouding with red.

When it's over, Mercury rises from the pool, dripping wet, covered from head to toe in a crimson sheen.

She kisses Frost hungrily, letting Gideon's blood flow from her mouth to his. Frost flicks a tongue over his lips.

FROST

AB positive. Give the man a prize.

Below them, Gideon's lifeless body sinks towards the pool bottom, his police badge twinkling like sunken treasure.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Blade's Olds cruises to a stop. We're in a low-end commercial district -- junky heaven. Blade climbs out, pulling an automatic rifle from the back seat, then heading into an alleyway.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Blade makes his way down the alley, cautious -- he SEES mountains of trash, boarded-up windows, overlapping layers of gang graffiti -- a RAT crouching on a trash dumpster, gnawing on a dead pigeon --

-- then a SOUND behind Blade, the scuffle of feet --

Blade whirls, drawing his sword, CHARGING at an approaching shadow, stopping mere millimeters from decapitating --

KAREN,

who's been backed up against the wall, her eyes wide with fright. Blade's sword vibrates from the tension in his forearm, having drawn just the slightest taste of blood.

BLADE

What the hell are you doing?! I could have killed you!

Blade lowers his sword. Karen remembers to breathe. She slumps, tracing her fingers over the line where her head almost parted with her body.

KAREN

I remembered the address. I followed

you --

Blade shakes his head, amazed.

BLADE

Do you have a death wish or are you just stupid?

Karen pushes away from the wall, angry --

KAREN

Look, if what you say is true, if there's a chance I could turn into one of them, then I've got no choice, do I? I have to work with you. I need to learn everything I can about them. It's the only way I'll be able to find a cure for myself.

BLADE

There is no cure.

KAREN

(defiant)

You don't know that.

Blade turns and moves to the end of the alley, studying the graffiti-covered wall intently --

KAREN

What are you looking at?

BLADE

(gesturing)

What do you see here?

KAREN

Graffiti --

BLADE

Look closer.

Blade indicates a design amongst the various gang-banger tags that looks something like a post-modern hieroglyphic.

BLADE

This isn't a gang tag, it's a vampire marking. It means there's a safe-house nearby.

A place they can go if dawn is coming.

Blade points to a building across the street --

THE HOLLISTON CLINIC,

your basic inner-city blood-barter establishment where desperate transients parley their plasma into cash.

KAREN

(recognizing it)
I know this place -- it's a blood
bank.

BLADE

Owned by vampires. There's one of
these in every major city, and just
like Domino's, they always deliver.
(looking to Karen)
You telling me you're ready to walk
through that door?

Karen nods. Blade continues to stare at her, taking her measure --
there's a strength in this woman's eyes, she has the soul of a
fighter -- and Blade recognizes it.

BLADE

All right, then, listen up, Vampire
Anatomy 101. Crosses and running water
don't do dick, so forget what you've
seen in the movies.

Blade enumerates the following on his fingers:

BLADE

You use the stake, silver, or
sunlight, got it?

Blade holds up one of his Casulls.

BLADE

Know how to use one of these?

Karen takes the weapon from him, eyes all over it.

KAREN

No.

Blade takes the gun back, snorting derisively.

BLADE

Safety's off, round's already
chambered --
(cocking it)
Silver hollow-points filled with
garlic. You aim for the heart or the
head, anything else is a one-way
ticket to a pine box.

Blade hand it to her again, then starts across the street towards the
clinic. Karen follows --

INT. HOLLISTON CLINIC, LOBBY - NIGHT

Blade enters, swinging his rifle around for all to see.

BLADE

Get out. Now.

The POTENTIAL DONORS scramble for the exit. Behind the counter, TANAKA, a male nurse, reaches for an alarm button. Blade vaults over the counter, aiming his rifle.

BLADE

I know you're blood-running. Who's your sponsor?

TANAKA

I don't know what you're --

POW! Blade backhands him across the face hard enough to loosen his teeth. Karen flinches, stepping forward --

KAREN

What if you've made a mistake?

Blade pins Tanaka's head to the wall, turning it to the side -- revealing the man's glyph. It's different than Gideon's, looking more like a Japanese kanji character.

BLADE

What's this? A birthmark?

Blade grips Tanaka by his collar, shoving him through a doorway --

INT. HOLLISTON CLINIC, SUPPLY ROOM - NIGHT

Karen and Blade SEE supply cabinets, cots, a number of locked refrigeration units. Blade FIRES into the door handle of one of the units, tears it open -- the fridge is stacked floor to ceiling with plastic packets of blood.

BLADE

(to Karen)

Still think we might be wrong?

(to Tanaka)

How much are you shipping?

TANAKA

Bite me!

Blade opens FIRE, sweeping his rifle around the room, shooting everything in sight. Glass cabinetry shatters, ampoules and vacutainers go flying. Tanaka cowers, arms wrapped about his head.

Blade stops shooting. He leans down towards Tanaka, placing the end of his rifle against the man's forehead. Tanaka looks like he's about to wet his pants.

BLADE

I've got a message for your masters --
the night's no longer safe for their

kind.

Blade pulls back his rifle, leaving a red indentation mark where the end of the rifle barrel pressed into Tanaka's skin. He starts towards the exit. Karen follows.

CUT TO:

INT. BLADE'S OLDS - NIGHT

Blade and Karen return to the Olds. He keys the ignition, lets the engine idle. They're parked down the street from the blood clinic. Karen looks to Blade, confused --

KAREN

You let him go --
(off Blade's nod)
An hour ago you were ready to kill a man for less, this one didn't even talk.

BLADE

He will.

Blade points --

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD --

Tanaka rushes from the clinic, climbing behind the wheel of a Mustang parked nearby. He takes off --

Blade follows the Mustang, CLICKING on a cell-phone scanner mounted on the dash. Numbers flash on the LCD screen as it searches for a signal, then locks onto it. We hear a DIAL TONE, then a number being dialed --

AUTOMATED VOICE

(filtered, on scanner)
"You've reached a number that is no longer in service. Please consult your operator and try again".

TANAKA'S VOICE

(filtered, on scanner)
It's Tanaka, PIN number sixteen-zero-zero-nine --

A "real" voice comes on the line:

VOICE

(filtered, on scanner)
Yes?

Karen looks to Blade, impressed.

INT. TANAKA'S MUSTANG - NIGHT

Tanaka speeds, shouting into the speaker phone --

TANAKA

Get me Pearl!

VOICE

(filtered, on speaker)

Pearl is feeding --

TANAKA

Look, I'm not fucking around here!
That hunter Frost has been talking
about? He was just at the clinic. Tore
the goddamn place apart!

EXT. THE BLACK PEARL - NIGHT

Tokyo town. A black edifice, no windows, secured parking, no signage except for a purple neon scroll above the entrance -- a FLASHING KANJI, just like the glyph tattooed on Tanaka's neck.

Tanaka's Mustang pulls into the parking lot. He climbs out, flagging away the valets, heads inside --

WHIP PAN TO

Blade's Olds stopping a few blocks down the street.

INT. BLADE'S OLDS - NIGHT

Blade kills the engine, studying The Black Pearl.

BLADE

Looks like we hit pay-dirt. This place
is crawling with them.

(pointing)

See the valets over there? They're
vampires. So is the doorman.

KAREN

How can you tell?

BLADE

The way they move, the way they
smell --

Blade continues to scan the area, pointing out a few more likely candidates --

BLADE

The whore on the corner, she's one
too. So are the two men standing under
the streetlight.

Blade reaches into the back seat, retrieves his sword and a satchel. He snaps open his shotgun, loads it. Karen continues to study the vampires Blade identified.

KAREN

So many of them -- I still can't believe they're real.

BLADE

There are worse things than vampires out there.

KAREN

Like what?

BLADE

(pumping his shotgun)
Like me.

Blade reaches for the door --

EXT. THE BLACK PEARL - NIGHT

Blade and Karen climb out. He lets his shotgun fall within the folds of his longcoat and starts across the street -- only to be challenged by a HULKING DOORMAN at the entrance.

DOORMAN

I'm sorry, sir -- do you have an invitation?

INT. BLACK PEARL - NIGHT

CRASH! The front door flies open as the Doorman's body sails through. Blade enters, Karen at his heels --

The 'Pearl' is an all-hours strip club cum casino catering exclusively to Japanese zaibatsu clientele. Dimly lit, the air thick with cigarette smoke, deafening MUSIC. Go boards, pachinko machines, sexy little MANGA WAIFS in schoolgirl outfits doling out drinks --

STRIPPERS writhe in the circular "pit" tables surrounded by HOWLING grab-ass men. But that's nothing compared to --

The MAIN ATTRACTION,

who's doing a bump and grind down the runway, shaking a body worthy of a schoolboy's wet dream. Her attire? A leather S&M face mask, nipple rings, 6-inch spikes, and a pair of panties to hide her modesty.

Blade scans the room -- just in time to see Tanaka ducking into a back hallway. Blade pushes towards the rear of the club. Karen follows.

ON THE STRIPPER

as she catches sight of Blade and freezes in mid-routine. The stripper pulls off her hood. Long black hair with a streak of white tumbles down her back -- it's Mercury.

INT. BLACK PEARL, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Blade and Karen head past the bathrooms. At the end of the hall is a door marked "OFFICE". Just then, the Men's door opens, a DRUNK COLLEGE KID steps out, SEES Blade --

KID

Hey --

Blade plants a hand over the kid's face, shoving him back into the bathroom as he kicks open the office door --

INT. THE BLACK PEARL, BACK OFFICE - NIGHT

Tanaka spins around, startled, tries to throw a punch --

Blade traps Tanaka's arm, levering the man up and over. He CRASHES into a shelving unit, taking the whole thing down with him. Karen winces. Blade grabs a handful of Tanaka's hair, yanks his head up --

BLADE

Where's the entrance?!

TANAKA

I can't -- they'll kill me!

Blade rips off his glasses and gives Tanaka an eyeful -- his irises pulse and glow.

BLADE

I got news for you, butt-boy. You're already dead.

TANAKA

(terrified)

Oh God, shit -- behind the bookcase --

Blade drops Tanaka, moves to the bookcase. He searches the wall a moment, then finds a trigger. Hits it -- the bookcase slides aside, revealing a hidden elevator. As Blade moves to put his sunglasses back on --

BLADE'S POV (IN THE REFLECTION OF HIS SUNGLASSES)

We see Tanaka behind him, pulling a handgun out of a desk drawer, swinging it up --

Blade unholsters one of his Casulls faster than any gunslinger in history. He FIRES over his own shoulder, BLOWING Tanaka back against the wall.

Blade puts his sunglasses back on, motions to the elevator, then nods to Karen --

BLADE

After you.

INT. THE BLACK PEARL, ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The elevator descends. Then a tone CHIMES, signaling the end of the ride. The doors hiss open --

INT. THE VAMPIRE ARCHIVES, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Blade and Karen enter the narrow, maze-like "stacks" of the vampire archives, weaving their way through shelves of climate-controlled, digitized records.

KAREN

What is this place?

BLADE

Some kind of archive --

KAREN

Isn't this all a little high-tech? I thought vampires were more into cobwebs and coffins.

BLADE

You've been watching too much TV. They've got their claws sunk into everything -- finance, real estate, politics. Probably own half of Downtown.

Blade pulls a CD-ROM from the shelves, its spine labeled in indecipherable vampire glyphs.

BLADE

This must be where they keep their records --

He pauses, hearing a DISTANT WHISPER. Blade signals quiet, silently leading Karen through the stacks towards --

PEARL'S LAIR

A vestibule of sorts, leading to a larger bed chamber constructed of rice paper shoji screens and tatami mats. Candles glow within, illuminating a MONSTROUSLY OBESE SHADOW beyond the translucent rice paper walls.

The shadow speaks in a tremulous, bird-like voice -- the secret tongue. As Blade draws his sword, the massive shadow freezes --

PEARL'S VOICE

(frightened)

Lorca, is that you?

Blade slides open the nearest shoji screen --

INT. PEARL'S BED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Nothing Karen's seen up until this point could prepare her for the archive's curator --

PEARL,

a nine-hundred-pound androgynous vampire of Asian origin, lounging amidst pillowed rice mats, wearing a communications headset. Think of a cross between Divine and Jabba The Hutt. Skin the complexion of buttermilk, so corpulent he can barely move, so engorged with blood that he's actually sweating it from the pores of his skin.

Pearl is surrounded by a nest of monitors and keyboards which have been affixed to counter-balanced arms -- this way, Pearl can access information without leaving bed.

Lying next to Pearl, dwarfed by the vampire's massive size, is the chalk-white body of a recently-drained NAKED BOY.

At the sight of Blade, Pearl's eyes widen in fear --

PEARL

(into a speakerphone)
He's here!

FROST'S VOICE

(over speakerphone)
Congratulations, Day-Walker.

BLADE

Frost?

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE, POOL - NIGHT

Frost paces the length of his pool, wearing a hands-free communications headset, grinning.

FROST

In the flesh, Blade. I understand you've been looking for me. I'm flattered.

INT. PEARL'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

As Blade listens, Pearl reaches for his trackball, attempting to delete the document currently on his monitors -- but Blade lunges forward, sinking the tip of his sword into Pearl's fleshy throat. Pearl freezes.

BLADE

(eyeballing Pearl)
Don't be. You're another notch on my sword hilt, nothing else.

Frost's DEEP LAUGHTER drifts from the speakerphone.

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE, POOL - NIGHT

Frost settles into his chair, enjoying the cat and mouse.

FROST

You're quick, Blade, I'll give you that. In the space of an hour you've crossed my familiar, destroyed a blood bank --

(beat)

Now here you are in the heart of our archives, terrorizing our curator.

PEARL'S VOICE

He has a knife to my throat, Frost!
He --

FROST

(cutting him off)

You're history, Pearl. Have the good grace to die with some dignity.

(beat)

Round one to you, Blade.

INT. PEARL'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

CLICK, the line goes dead. Blade tosses his satchel on the bed, opens it. Inside is a hand-held UV lamp hooked up to a nine-volt battery. Pearl eyes the device, fearful --

PEARL

What is that?

BLADE

A sun lamp. We're gonna play twenty questions. Depending on your answers, you might get to have yourself a tanning session.

Blade looks to Pearl's monitor and SEES a digitized image, the SAME MANUSCRIPT Deacon had been studying earlier.

BLADE

What were you in such a big hurry to delete just now?

Pearl hesitates. Blade turns on the lamp. Pearl HOWLS as the harsh light falls upon him. Blade flicks the light off.

Pearl cringes, GROWLING, his face smoking profusely. Exposure to the UV rays, even for one short second, has made his face blister like a plague victim's.

PEARL

(relenting)

It's an epistle, a letter Frost has been translating -- it prophesizes LaMagra's return.

BLADE

And who is LaMagra?

Pearl hesitates again -- Blade turns on the lamp for a longer time. Pearl thrashes, covering his face. His hands blacken, the skin sizzling away to expose the finger bones beneath. Karen has to avert her gaze --

Blade turns off the lamp. Pearl SNARLS, his body quivering with poisonous rage.

PEARL

LaMagra is The Sleeper!!!

Blade leans in close so he's eye to eye with Pearl.

BLADE

Where's the original, Pearl? You must have it around here somewhere.

Pearl sweats blood, his flaking, slug-like lips quivering.

PEARL

The vault --

Blade follows Pearl's eyes to an armored door, then he stands back, handing the UV rig to Karen.

BLADE

If he moves, cook him.

Blade approaches the vault door, sizing up its locking mechanism. He pulls an explosive charge from his combat belt and secures it to the door, arming it with a BEEP!

PEARL

Please, I'll give you the combination -- you'll damage the documents --

BLADE

That's the point.

Enraged, Pearl LUNGES from his bed. Karen triggers the UV rig, flash-frying him to a blackened crisp. Pearl quivers, his enormous body smoking like a piece of charred meat.

Blade looks back at Karen with newfound respect. She shrugs.

KAREN

He moved.

Blade turns back to the vault, setting off the charge. BOOM! Blade kicks the damaged door in, knocking it clear off its hinges --

INSIDE THE VAULT,

ancient papers flutter through the smoky air like wind-borne leaves. Blade and Karen SEE a lucite-encased document -- fragments of an ancient, calligraphied papyrus.

KAREN

What are these?

QUINN (o.s.)

Curiosity killed the cat.

Blade and Karen spin --

-- **QUINN,**

Mercury, and a number of other vampires stand at the entrance to the vault.

QUINN

(grins)

Hola, amigo. Remember me?

Karen triggers the UV light, but Mercury ducks under it, ripping it from her hands, crushing it. In a split-second, the she-demon has her claws around Karen's throat.

As Blade reaches for his rifle, the vampires converge on him like quicksilver. They drag Karen and Blade out --

PEARL'S BEDCHAMBER

The vampires fling Blade against the wall, pinning him.

QUINN

You took my arm, Blade. But that's okay, I'm growing a new one --

Quinn lifts up his "arm". A skeletal forearm has grown from the stump. It's got cartilage, sinew, and muscle, but no flesh yet.

QUINN

Nice, huh? Think I'll ever play the piano again?

(shrugging)

You can slice him, you can dice him, and the man just keeps on coming.

Blade struggles violently, but Quinn is upon him, pounding his fist into Blade again and again and again -- giving him payback with compounded interest. When it's over, Quinn steps back, winded --

Blade's head hangs down. He gasps, wincing, every breath sending a red hot poker to his gut. Quinn grabs a hold of Blade's jaw, forcing his head up.

QUINN

Stay with me, sweetness, I'm not through with you yet.

Quinn pulls Blade's jacket open, sees the bandoleer of mahogany stakes. He tugs one out, admiring it.

QUINN

Teak. Nice craftsmanship.

(to the others)

Now here's a man who takes his job just a little too seriously, don't you think?

(back to Blade)

Which reminds me, Blade, think I owe you one --

Quinn stabs the stake into Blade's shoulder. Blade CRIES OUT, tries to pull free. Karen, who's being held by Mercury, averts her gaze.

QUINN

Actually, if you want to get technical, I owe you two.

As Quinn reaches for another stake, Blade starts to laugh.

QUINN

What's so funny, bright eyes?

BLADE

I'm expecting some company.

It's then that Quinn notices the micro ear-coil radio receiver in Blade's ear. As we MOVE IN on it, we hear a tiny VOICE squawking from it:

VOICE

(filtered)

Get down!

Blade kicks his feet out, sending Quinn flying backwards. He tears free of the vamps holding him and DIVES forward, knocking Karen to the ground just as --

BOOM!!! The wall of Pearl's bedchamber EXPLODES INWARD, knocking Quinn and the rest of his cronies to their feet.

WHISTLER

stands in the smoking hole where the wall used to be, brandishing his cane in one hand and an automatic rifle in the other. He balances the rifle against his hip like an over-the-hill gunslinger and OPENS FIRE on the vampires.

Blade rolls, snatching up a fragment of the parchment which has blown free from the vault. Seconds later, he and Karen are fleeing after Whistler, retreating back through his newly created exit.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

The three of them find themselves ankle-deep in a flooded sewer tunnel running parallel to the archives. Whistler pauses, wheezing from overexertion.

WHISTLER

Christ, I'm too old for this. Somebody get me a goddamn wheelchair.

Blade leans against the tunnel wall, GRUNTING as he yanks the stake from his shoulder. He then pulls out a light-stick, snapping it, illuminating the area in a GREEN GLOW -- disturbing waves of **GLITTERING COCKROACHES**.

Meanwhile, Whistler pulls another explosive device from his backpack and sets it against the tunnel wall, arming it.

KAREN

How did you find us?!

Whistler taps a tiny radio headset curled around his ear.

WHISTLER

We keep in radio contact.

KAREN

(incredulous)

You've been listening in the whole time?

WHISTLER

You think I'd let him run loose without a chaperone? Blade ferrets their rat-holes out, I map them. Then we blow them all to kingdom come.

Whistler finishes arming the explosive device. It BEEPS. He turns back to Blade and Karen, referring to a handheld navigation device.

WHISTLER

There's a subway line due East of here. We'd best make tracks.

INT. PEARL'S BEDCHAMBER, ARCHIVES - NIGHT

An EXPLOSION rips through the bedchamber, mushrooming outward --

INT. BLACK PEARL - NIGHT

The EXPLOSION continues expanding, sending tables, drinks, and zaibatsu clientele flying.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

As the group splashes through the water, a FIREBALL chases them down the tunnel. They duck into an alcove, narrowly avoiding the flames. Whistler WHOOPS with excitement, loving every minute of it. But his triumph is short-lived, for now we hear --

-- a deafening chorus of HIGH-PITCHED VAMPIRE WAR CRIES coming from behind. Karen hazards a look back --

THE VAMPIRES

surge down the tunnel like a pack of hungry wolves on high-octane. There must be a dozen of them now and Quinn is right in the lead.

Our trio hustles along, but Whistler stumbles, tumbling and sliding down a washout. The steep incline of the washout makes it virtually impossible for Whistler to climb back up to the main tunnel.

KAREN

Whistler!

WHISTLER

Go on, I'll be fine!

Karen hesitates, but Blade yanks her down the tunnel --

BLADE

He can take care of himself! GO!!!

They race through the twisting warren of tunnels, taking one turn after another, the vampires hot on their heels --

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Blade and Karen stumble out into a larger subway tunnel, which widens into a station stop up ahead. We can see the RED TAIL-LIGHTS of a train just pulling away from the platform -- Blade and Karen re-double their efforts, lungs burning, legs pumping like mad. Just as the train enters the next tunnel --

-- they leap, dragging themselves up onto the back of the rear-passenger car. Blade SMASHES his fist through the emergency exit window, then lifts Karen up, helping her climb through into the car --

-- but the vampires are still coming! Crawling along the tunnel walls on all fours, limbs a blur, claws striking the concrete and spewing out sparks. Closing fast. Too fast.

QUINN

springs forward, snagging Blade's ankle with his "good" hand. The vampire's weight threatens to haul Blade down. Blade reaches to his back-scabbard, unsheathes his sword --

THUNK! Blade brings the sword down on Quinn's good arm, cutting it off at the wrist! Quinn falls to the tracks, tumbling head over heels back into the darkness --

THE AMPUTATED HAND,

which continues to clutch at Blade's ankle, starts to melt. With a

cry of disgust, Blade kicks the thing away. He turns and climbs through the window --

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Karen helps Blade inside. He sinks to the floor of the otherwise deserted car, exhausted. He's looking ashen now. The whites of his eyes are shot through with red.

Karen gets a good look at Blade's wounds -- the front of his jacket is soaked in blood. She reaches for him --

KAREN

You're hurt --

BLADE

Nothing that won't heal by dawn.

Blade reaches into his jacket and pulls out the small, gas-powered pistol-injector we saw Whistler inject him with earlier. He tries to load one of the ampoules into it, but because of his wounds, he's not having much luck --

BLADE

(frustrated)

I need help with this --

Karen nods, inserting the ampoule into the gun. Blade shrugs off his jacket, holds out his arm. Karen pauses --

KAREN

What am I injecting you with?

BLADE

(weakly)

Serum -- it's a human hemoglobin substitute.

Karen locates a vein, presses the injector against it -- Blade tenses, grits his teeth, fights to keep his body thrashing as the serum enters his bloodstream. He grips the wall behind him -- actually digs his nails into the metal surface -- the agony he's going through is excruciating, like nothing we could imagine.

When it's over, he slumps forward, spent, vulnerable, flushed with sweat. Karen stares at him --

KAREN

You're one of them, aren't you?

Blade turns away from Karen, filled with self-loathing.

BLADE

Not quite. I'm a hybrid. Half-human, half-vampire.

Off Karen's surprised reaction, we --

CUT TO:

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

The loading elevator CLANGS to a stop. Blade throws the gate open. Karen helps him out. Now that they're safely back, the last of Blade's strength seems to dissipate.

WHISTLER

is waiting for them, sitting at a workbench.

WHISTLER

What took you so long?

BLADE

Don't even start, old man.

Blade throws his sword aside, then moves off into the shadows, disappearing beyond the curtains. Karen looks to Whistler --

KAREN

Why didn't you tell me the truth about him?

WHISTLER

We weren't sure we could trust you.

Whistler sighs, removing his glasses.

WHISTLER

Blade's mother was attacked by a vampire while she was pregnant. Ultimately, she died, but her unborn child lived. Unfortunately, he'd undergone certain genetic changes while in the womb --

Whistler reaches for a pack of cigarettes, pulls one out. He thumbs a match, fires up. Takes a long drag --

WHISTLER

I found Blade when he was thirteen. He'd been living on the streets, feeding off the homeless. Apparently the Thirst manifested itself at puberty --

(beat)

I took him for one of them at first, almost killed him, too. But then I realized what he was.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGEWOOD TOWERS, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Frost stands at the window, looking out at the glimmering cityscape before him.

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Frost turns away from window. Quinn, Mercury, and the other vampires from the Black Pearl stand before him. Quinn cradles his amputated stump with his newly grown arm.

QUINN

He took my fucking hand! Again!

FROST

You seem to be in the habit of losing them fairly often, Quinn. Maybe the amputee lifestyle just suits you.

The other vampires laugh. Quinn stares them into silence.

QUINN

We need to find him, tonight.

Frost claps a hand on Quinn's shoulder.

FROST

Down, boy. Blade's not going anywhere. I promise. Right now, though, we've more pressing business --
(off Mercury's look)
It's time Dragonetti paid the piper.

CUT TO:

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Whistler studies Karen, exhaling another lungful of smoke.

WHISTLER

Blade's unique, you know. A one in a billion anomaly. He can withstand sunlight, garlic, even silver. But he still has the Thirst.

KAREN

What happens if he doesn't take the serum?

WHISTLER

The Thirst overcomes him, just like the others. It's not something he can control.

(sighs)

The problem is, time's running out. His body's starting to reject the serum. And so far, all my efforts to find a cure have ended in failure --

KAREN

No offense, Whistler, but you're not exactly working with state of the art equipment here. You might have missed something.

WHISTLER

(pointedly)

Which is why you're here. We could use someone with your experience.

A beat passes between them and Karen knows where she stands now. In for a penny, in for a pound. Whistler reaches for Blade's sword.

WHISTLER

This used to be mine, you know. It's been passed down through the centuries, from one hunter to the next --

Whistler extends the sword, sighting down the length of it. He takes a few practice parries -- it's obvious he used to be quite skilled in the art of swordsmanship.

KAREN

Why do you hunt them?

WHISTLER

Habit, mostly, just like this.

Whistler gestures with his cigarette. He finally stubs it out, his wistful reverie vanishing like so much smoke.

WHISTLER

I had a family once -- a wife, three daughters. Then a drifter named Deacon Frost came calling one evening --

KAREN

He killed them?

WHISTLER

Eventually. He toyed with them first. He made me choose, do you understand? Which order they would die in --

Karen stares at Whistler, horrified.

KAREN

How did you escape?

WHISTLER

I didn't. He was cruel enough to let me live.

(slapping his brace)

Even gave me a souvenir to remember him by.

Karen nods -- it's all falling into place for her now.

KAREN

And now you're using Blade to exact
your revenge?

WHISTLER

(pointedly)
Frost's bodycount keeps rising, and
I'm not getting any younger, am I?

Just then, we hear a SCREAM come from Blade's room, sounding more
like the cry of a beast than a man. Karen takes a step towards
Blade's room --

WHISTLER

I wouldn't go in there if I were you.
It's best to leave him alone when he's
like this.

KAREN

I'll take my chances.

INT. BLADE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Karen enters. It's dark, just a trace of moonlight.

KAREN

Blade?

No answer. Then Karen SEES him -- crouched in the corner of the room
like some kind of nocturnal animal.

KAREN

It's dark in here.

BLADE

You get used to the darkness.

Karen takes a step towards him.

KAREN

Whistler told me about your mother.

Blade clutches the silver locket in his hand. It swings back and
forth, like a pendulum.

BLADE

I can't close my eyes without hearing
her scream.

KAREN

Those aren't real memories. No one has
that kind of recall.

BLADE

I do. I remember from day one. People staring at me, sensing I was different. Watching the fear grow in their eyes, knowing in their hearts I wasn't human.

KAREN

If you're not human, then why do you bleed like us?
I've seen vampire blood, you don't have it running through your veins.

Blade looks at Karen, his lambent eyes glowing in the moonlight.

BLADE

Just get out of here.

KAREN

Blade --

Blade turns, his eyes glowing with preternatural fury.

BLADE

I said, GET OUT!!!

Karen backs away, startled by Blade's vehemence. She exits, leaving him alone with his demons. He holds up one of his empty serum ampoules, crushing it in his fist.

FROST'S VOICE

Rise and shine, little wing.

EXT. THE BURNING GROUNDS - JUST BEFORE DAWN

FADE IN on Dragonetti, his face covered with a black condemned man's hood --

Frost stands before him, grinning like the Cheshire Cat. He's dressed from head to toe in a black motorcycle suit -- boots, gloves, a visored helmet tucked under one arm. Mercury and Quinn are standing nearby, similarly attired.

We're on a stretch of rocky coastline, tucked away in a secluded cove. Dragonetti has been stripped bare, chained like Prometheus to an ancient standing stone.

DRAGONETTI

(straining)

What is this? Where am I?!

Frost steps forward, pulling Dragonetti's hood off. Dragonetti stares at his surroundings, horrified.

FROST

When was the last time you stopped to appreciate a sunrise, Dragonetti?
Three, four hundred years?

Frost checks his watch, then looks to the ocean. On the horizon, a sliver of gold appears.

FROST

How do you like that? Right on time.

DRAGONETTI

(snarling)

The other elders will never let you get away with this!

Just then, the TWELVE VAMPIRE ELDERS emerge behind Frost, forming a circle around Dragonetti. All wear business suits, gloves, along with high-tech "sun masks" to protect their faces from the light's lethal rays.

They stare at Dragonetti like a silent jury. His face darkens, anger rising -- but there's a desperation in his eyes now too. He speaks in the secret tongue:

DRAGONETTI

(subtitled)

Don't you see, you fools?! He'll betray you too! He's planning on invoking LaMagra himself!

The vampires just smile and shake their heads.

FROST

The wheel turns, old fang. Guess you just got a little too long in the tooth.

Dragonetti's cries are cut short as Frost forces the aging vampire's mouth open, ripping out his fangs with his bare hands. Dragonetti GURGLES and SHRIEKS, sounding like a dying animal.

Frost turns to face the Twelve now, his eyes bright with victory. He pulls on his motorcycle helmet, as do Mercury and Quinn.

Behind them, Dragonetti struggles furiously against his chains to no avail as the first faint rays of daylight fall upon him, channeled inward by the natural formation of the cove --

Dragonetti HOWLS, his skin beginning sizzle and smoke. Then he catches fire like paper beneath a magnifying glass. He thrashes about as his flesh starts to run from his body.

THE VAMPIRE ELDERS

watch, impassive, protected by their masks --

-- when suddenly, TWELVE FIGURES rise up behind them, clad in bike helmets and black leather, just like Frost. The intruders grip each of the Elders in a strangle hold, ripping their masks off.

FROST

Dragonetti was right. You were fools
to trust me.

Frost flips down the visor of his helmet even as --

THE RED SUN

rises in all its fiery glory.

One by one, the vampire Elder's heads catch fire, skullflesh sizzling away -- burning down the line of them in successively building intensity until all twelve EXPLODE in a conflagration of **BLINDING WHITE LIGHT**.

Frost and his compatriots are blown off their feet by the sheer intensity of the occult blast -- a blast which sends the skeletal bodies of the Elders **SLAMMING** into the rock wall.

When it's over, Frost picks himself back up. We SEE that the only thing left of Dragonetti and the others are --

THIRTEEN SHADOW SILHOUETTES

permanently etched onto the rock's surface, just like the bombing victims of Hiroshima.

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Karen stands at a lab table with Whistler, preparing a number of blood sample vials. They are surrounded by host of new medical equipment -- from centrifuges to genetic sequencers and beyond.

Blade emerges from his room, looks to Karen. As if by silent agreement, last night's words go unacknowledged. He straps on his bandoleer of stakes, secures his scabbard.

WHISTLER

Going somewhere?

BLADE

China Town. I need more serum.
(re: new equipment)
What's all this?

KAREN

I made a trip to the hospital last night, borrowed some equipment.

BLADE

(sarcastic)
For your miracle cure?

WHISTLER

She's been making real progress,
Blade.
(to Karen)

Show him --

Karen looks to Blade, who shrugs. She opens a refrigerator, removing a syringe filled with blue fluid.

KAREN

This is sodium citrate. It's an anti-coagulant. We use it to treat blood-clots sometimes. Vampire blood is thinner than humans, though. Watch what happens when I introduce some into a sample --

Karen gestures to the microscope. Blade takes a look --

BLADE'S POV

Vampire blood cells swirling about.

Karen injects the contents of the syringe onto the slide of cells -- the reaction is immediate. The vampire blood turns black, then begins violently bubbling.

Blade lifts his head away from the microscope just in time -- the blood on the slide atomizes, exploding outward in a fine mist which bursts apart the glass lens of the scope.

Whistler laughs, thrilled with the results.

WHISTLER

Can you imagine what a dash of that would do on your sword?

Whistler claps his hand on Karen's shoulder in approval, then limps away, quickly busying himself with another project. Blade moves to follow, but Karen stops him --

KAREN

Before you go, I'd like to take a sample of your blood.

Blade grudgingly rolls up his sleeve. As Karen takes her sample, Blade looks to Whistler. The older man brings a handkerchief to his lips, coughing into it.

KAREN

Is he sick?

BLADE

Cancer.

Karen watches as Blade's blood flows into the vacutainer. She fills the first, then inserts another.

KAREN

You care about him, don't you?

BLADE

We've got a good arrangement, that's all. Whistler makes the weapons, I use them, the vampires die -- end of story.

Karen finishes. Blade rolls up his sleeve.

KAREN

(pointedly)

My mother used to say that a cold heart is a dead heart.

BLADE

Your mother sounds like a Hallmark greeting card.

Blade slips his Casulls into a shoulder holster, then shrugs into his leather jacket, donning his sunglasses.

BLADE

I'd wish you luck, Doc, but I never put much stock in optimism.

He heads towards the elevator.

EXT. CHINATOWN, STREETS - DAY

Blade makes his way down a street lined with vending stalls -- passing MERCHANTS peddling exotic vegetables and cheap curios, butcher shops with rows of roast ducks in the window, tyro GANG-BANGERS lounging at the entrance to a video arcade.

BLADE'S POV

Even though the streets are crowded, the people seem to make way for him, avoiding eye-contact.

Blade turns into a dark alley, ducking into the doorway of a hole-in-the-wall herbalist shop.

INT. HERBALIST SHOP - DAY

A bell atop the door JINGLES, announcing Blade's arrival. We're in a dusty, cave-like room filled with baskets and bottle-lined shelves featuring things like "Toad Spleen Extract" and "Barking Deer Wine". Joss sticks burn, sending wispy tendrils of incense into the air.

At the back of the shop, an elderly CHINESE MAN in a cardigan sits in front of a battered television, watching a boxing match. He's eating a bowl of litchi fruit. On the counter nearby, a SPIDER MONKEY watches attentively.

BLADE

How's it going, Kam?

KAM

(re: calendar)
You're a week early.

BLADE

I was in the neighborhood.

Kam sets his fruit bowl aside, leads Blade through a curtain into a back room.

INT. HERBALIST SHOP, BACK ROOM - DAY

Kam hands Blade a leather valise. He opens it -- its lined with tiny ampoules of scarlet-colored serum. Blade pulls one out, holds it up to the light.

BLADE

Whistler says I'm building up a resistance to it.

KAM

I was afraid that might happen.

BLADE

Maybe it's time to start exploring other alternatives.

KAM

There's only one alternative to the serum.

Blade nods. They both know what that "alternative" is.

BLADE

Yeah. I know.

Blade closes the valise and tucks it inside his jacket.

BLADE

Thanks, Kam.

(thinking)

One other thing. Have you ever heard of a vampire called the Sleeper?

Kam shakes his head. Blade pulls out the parchment he took from Pearl.

BLADE

I found this in there archives. I need to find someone who can read their language.

Kam studies the parchment.

KAM

I've heard about a woman named Miracia. Some say she's a mayombero, a Santeria witch. Supposedly she lives

in that tent community down by the
city dump. I'm told she only sees
people at night.

Blade nods his thanks and heads back through the curtains.

EXT. CHINATOWN, STREET - DAY

Blade emerges from the alley into the sunlight, then hears his name
WHISPERED on the wind.

VOICE (o.s.)

Blade.

Blade spins, scanning his surroundings -- did he really hear his
name, or was it just the wind?

VOICE (o.s.)

Blade.

Again, the taunting voice calls him. Blade's gaze finally settles
on --

A MAN

sitting on a bench in the deep shade, his face obscured by the
Chinese newspaper he's reading. There's a LITTLE GIRL sitting stiffly
beside the man -- a look of pure terror written on her face.

MAN

Afternoon, Blade.

The man lowers his newspaper. It's Deacon Frost. He's wearing
sunglasses, but otherwise, he's seemingly unprotected by the sun.

Blade reaches for his .454 --

FROST

Easy.

Frost's hand rests on the back of the girl's neck. We see his claws
extend, caressing the flesh beneath her chin.

FROST

Wouldn't want our little friend here
to wind up on the back of a milk
carton, would we?

Blade reluctantly lowers his hand. Frost smiles. He takes in a deep
breath of air, savoring it.

FROST

Beautiful day, isn't it?

BLADE

(confused)
How can you be out here?

FROST

I dabble in pharmaceuticals, medical research. We've developed a type of sun-blocker using octyl salicylate, a few others things.

On closer examination we see that Frost is wearing a translucent lotion on his face. He touches a finger to his cheek, rubs some of the lotion between his fingers.

FROST

It's not very effective in direct sunlight, but it's a start. The goal, of course, is to be like you, "the Day-walker".

BLADE

I don't buy it.

FROST

Why not? The future of our race runs through your bloodstream. You've got the best of both worlds, Blade. All of our strengths and none of our weaknesses.

BLADE

Maybe I don't see it that way.

FROST

Oh, so it's back to pretending we're human again, is it? Spare me the Uncle Tom routine. You can't keep denying what you are. You're one of us, Blade. You always have been.

BLADE

You're wrong.

FROST

Am I? You think the humans will ever accept a half-breed like you? They can't. They're afraid of you.

(pointedly)

The humans fear us because we're superior. They fear us because in their hearts they know their race has become obsolete.

Frost watches the marketers stream past, sneering in contempt.

FROST

Look at them, just an endless stream of cattle in a mad race to the slaughterhouse.

Frost lifts a silver flask to his mouth, taking a swig of blood. He smacks his lips, sighs contentedly --

FROST

The pause that refreshes --
(offering it to Blade)
Care for some? Smells good, doesn't
it? Pungent, with just an
irrepressible hint of iron.

BLADE

Pass.

FROST

You sure now? I bled a newborn for
this. You won't find a drink that's
sweeter.

It takes every ounce of Blade's self-control to keep from attacking Frost -- and Frost senses this, pressing his sharp thumbnail against the child's jugular.

FROST

Tell me honestly, do you really get
the same rush from that pasteurized
piss-serum of yours?
(off Blade's look)
You're surprised I know about your
serum? You shouldn't be. I know
everything about you.

Frost leans forward, grinning.

FROST

You can't keep walking the razor's
edge, Blade. The day will come -- and
soon, when you'll have to choose
between our kind and their's. If I
were you, I'd take care not to wind up
on the wrong end of the fang.

A bead of sweat runs down Frost's neck, washing away a minute amount of the sun-blocking cream. The patch of exposed skin instantly blackens. Frost gazes upwards at the sun.

FROST

Love to continue this chat, but it
appears I'm melting.

Frost rises, taking the little girl by the hand. Blade follows, his hand resting on the butt of his Casull.

BLADE

You're not going anywhere.

FROST

(growling)

Watch me.

Frost's eyes flicker towards the street -- a CITY BUS is rumbling by. In a heartbeat, Frost hurls the little girl forward --

-- out into the path of the oncoming bus!

Blade has a split-second to act. It's Frost or the girl -- and for a moment we actually think he's going to go for Frost --

-- but then he DIVES forward, scooping the girl into his arms, throwing themselves out of the bus' path. The bus misses them by a hair. By the time Blade looks up again --

-- Frost is gone. Blade rises, cursing, scanning the street as market-goers gather around him.

WHIP PAN TO --

SOMEONE sitting astride a motorcycle, watching Blade from the roof of an elevated parking garage. The rider is clad from head to toe in a helmet and black leather -- Mercury.

EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY - DAY

Blade's Olds cruises into the gated grounds. It zips down the ramp way into the loading elevator.

BACK BY THE TRAIN TRACKS --

Mercury's cycle rolls into frame. She picks up a radio handset and keys it.

MERCURY

(into radio)

This is Mercury. Tell Deacon I've found their hiding place.

CUT TO:

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Blade enters through the loading elevator, finding Karen and Whistler hard at work. She turns as he approaches -- SEES him back-lit by the sun. She looks pale, the whites of her eyes are streaked with red.

BLADE

Any progress?

KAREN

Some. It's been slow --

BLADE

You don't look so good.

KAREN

I'm just tired, that's all. We've been

up all night.

Blade nods, not buying her explanation. He shoots a glance to Whistler, which doesn't go unnoticed by Karen.

KAREN

Excuse me.

Karen turns, heading for the back of the workshop.

INT. WORKSHOP - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Karen enters a dingy bathroom, turning on the overhead bulb. She studies her reflection in the mirror above the sink, then grimaces as she peels the dressing from her wound -- the wound is clearly infected, gangrenous.

BLADE (O.S.)

It's started.

Karen spins, startled. Blade stands behind her. He grips her jaw, turning her head so he can better view the wound.

BLADE

You've got another day or two at most.

Karen nods, shaken. As she moves to leave, Blade reaches for her arm, stopping her.

BLADE

For what it's worth, I'm sorry.

KAREN

You make it sound like I'm already dead.

Blade just stares at her. Finally, she pulls away.

EXT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - DUSK

CLOSE ON Karen as she moves to the grimy outer windows, watching the sun go down, an unmistakable look of dread creeping over her.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANDFILL GHETTO - DUSK

Windy. Urban desolation. Blade stands on the perimeter of a sprawling cardboard and plywood squatter's ghetto which has sprung up around the city dump. CHILDREN and DOGS forage for salvageable items, while in the distance, dumptrucks grind over the dunes of refuse.

MOMENTS LATER,

Blade is winding his way through the maze of makeshift homes and ashcan fires. A CROWD quickly closes in around him, suspicious. A BRUTISH MAN steps forward, challenging him --

MAN

Extranjero. ¿Quien es?

BLADE

I'm here to see Miracia. Kam sent me.

The man turns to his fellow squatters, WHISPERING. After a heated debate, a GAUNT WOMAN steps forward, motioning --

WOMAN

This way.

CUT TO:

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Whistler and Karen sit at a work table. Karen is looking at a blood smear slide through a microscope.

KAREN

All right, let's start with the basics
-- why do vampires need to drink
blood?

WHISTLER

Their own blood can't sustain
hemoglobin.

KAREN

Then vampirism is a genetic defect,
just like Hemolytic anemia?

Whistler nods.

KAREN

So what about gene therapy?

Whistler looks intrigued. Karen continues.

KAREN

Basically you'd have to re-write the
victim's DNA, alter it so that the DNA
will produce proteins capable of
generating hemoglobin.

WHISTLER

How?

KAREN

With a retrovirus. It's injected into
the bone marrow cells, it causes the
host's DNA to mutate. They've been
using them to treat Sickle-cell
anemia.

Whistler can hardly believe what he's hearing.

WHISTLER

You're serious? You actually think
this could work?

Karen pauses -- we can see in her expression that there's something
she's been holding back.

KAREN

On me, yes. On Blade, I'm not so
sure --

(gravely)

The problem is, Blade didn't contract
the vampire virus from a bite like I
did. He was born with it. The irony
is, I could probably cure every
vampire but him.

WHISTLER

Then we're back to square one, aren't
we? Sooner or later, the Thirst always
wins.

At that moment, the lights in the workshop flicker, then go out.
Karen looks around the room, alarmed.

KAREN

What happened to the power?

WHISTLER

(concerned)

I don't know, but the back-up
generator should've kicked in.

A few seconds pass. The back-up generator still hasn't activated.
Whistler moves to the window --

WHISTLER

UV floodlights are down too.

As Whistler reaches for a flashlight we hear the sound of GLASS
SHATTERING coming from the other end of the workshop. Whistler shines
the flashlight in that direction. We hear more sounds now -- water
draining, glass tinkling.

Whistler raises a finger to his lips, signaling silence. He edges
towards the black-out curtains, Karen falling in behind him.

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - TANK ROOM - NIGHT

Whistler and Karen enter, cautious --

THE TANK

containing the vampire child has been smashed open. It's empty now,
with just the steadily draining blood seeping across the floor in a
widening pool -- and a trail of tiny BLOODY FOOTPRINTS leading back

out into the main workshop.

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Karen scans the shadows, eyes alert. We hear a WHISPER, then a teasing, childish, GIGGLE.

Whistler moves the flashlight in a slow circle, shining the beam over every inch of the room. And just as he's about to complete his circuit --

THE CHILD

leaps from where it had been hiding overhead! Karen SCREAMS. Whistler is knocked to the floor, the flashlight spinning from his hand --

The feral child lands atop Whistler, HISSING like a cobra. Its macrocephalic head seems to morph, twisting into grotesque proportions. And just as it's about to strike --

ZZZZING! Whistler withdraws a silver rapier which had been hidden inside his cane. He lunges forward --

WHOOSH! The child takes off like a blue streak, sending test tubes and medical equipment CRASHING to the floor. It zips past Karen --

WHISTLER

Get it!!!

Karen snatches up the flashlight, chasing after it as Whistler struggles to his feet --

Karen sweeps the flashlight around, catching only fleeting glimpses of the child as it darts through the workshop. She reaches a shelving unit where Whistler's weapons are stored, grabs one of the modified pistols --

Karen tries to draw a bead on the creature. She FIRES, misses, FIRES again -- she's getting more unnerved as the seconds tick by and the creature is moving closer and --

-- suddenly it's right in front of her, flying through the air, fangs bared!

The child knocks Karen back against the wall. It's at her throat, sinking its claws into her neck. Karen chokes, forcing Whistler's pistol under the monstrosity's chin --

-- but then the creature morphs again, transforming into a beatific little cherubim of a child -- and Karen hesitates, because the child seems so goddamned human now and its eyes are luminous, pulsing and hypnotic and --

-- suddenly Whistler reaches in from behind, YANKING the vampire child's head back, FIRING a pistol into its skull. The creature slumps --

Karen cries out, disgusted, flinging the corpse away from her. As it continues to writhe --

THUNK! Whistler swings his cane-rapier down on the creature, brutally decapitating it. Finishing the job. Then he looks to Karen, winded.

WHISTLER

Understand this -- they are monsters.
Hesitate for even a moment, and you've
lost.

FROST (O.S.)

Words to live by, Whistler.

Whistler spins, eyes wide. He knows that voice.

DEACON FROST

steps into the pool of illumination thrown off by the flashlight,
followed by Mercury and Quinn.

FROST

It's been a long time, hasn't it, "old
friend"?

EXT. LANDFILL GHETTO - MIRACIA'S CABIN - NIGHT

Blade is led to a plywood cabin crowded with candle-lit altars --
garish pictures of Saints and demons abound, alongside bottles of
roots and herbs steeped in alcohol, human bones, voodoo dolls.

MIRACIA

sits on a sagging couch outside, clutching a deck of well-thumbed
Bicycle playing cards. She's ancient, with a mouthful of gold-capped
teeth and cataract-clouded eyes. Blind.

MIRACIA

Is something wrong, my friend?

BLADE

You're blind --

MIRACIA

There are other ways to see. Sit.

Blade approaches, uneasy. Miracia deals out the playing cards on a
rickety table, setting them in nine piles which take on a cross
formation.

MIRACIA

Perhaps you have brought me something
-- an offering for the orishas?

Blade tosses a handful of bills on the table. Miracia nods, then
flips over the first card in the center pile -- a one-eyed Jack. She

sighs, grave --

MIRACIA

Hold out your hands.

BLADE

I didn't come here to get my palms
read. I need something translated.

MIRACIA

Show me.

Blade removes parchment fragment from his jacket and sets it on the table. Miracia traces her fingers over the ancient paper, touching her fingertips to her lips.

MIRACIA

Sangre. Written in blood.

She runs her hands over each line as if it were written in Braille. Some of the candles gutter, then extinguish themselves as the wind around them rises.

MIRACIA

This is an old tongue, from an old
world. It concerns LaMagra.

BLADE

Who is LaMagra?

MIRACIA

The vampire God. This speaks of His
return.

Miracia's fingers search the parchment again.

MIRACIA

-- there will come a Day Walker."
(reading)

"His blood will call the Sleeper from
beyond the Veil of Tears."

Blade stares at Miracia, shaken.

BLADE

His blood -- ?

The old woman nods, reaching for a smoldering cigarette.

MIRACIA

The Day Walker's blood is a disparador
-- a trigger, you see? For LaMagra's
return. One need only consume it and
the spirit of his ancestors will
settle upon him.

(reading)

"And the Sleeper will rise from the

shadows anew, cleansing the world in a Tide of Blood."

BLADE

(recalling the phrase)
"The Blood Tide".

MIRACIA

(nodding)
Yes. The vampire apocalypse. It is said that all who feel its taint will succumb to the Thirst.

BLADE

How do I stop it?

Miracia shrugs, spreading her hands.

MIRACIA

The Great Wheel turns, my friend. The Dark is rising. How would you fight a shadow?

Miracia sits back, slumping into her chair. The candles have burnt themselves down to nothing.

MIRACIA

I am tired. Dawn is coming.

BLADE

But I just got here --

MIRACIA

You've been here longer than you think.

Blade rises, looking to the horizon. Incredibly, dawn is coming. As he stands there, mystified, the wind picks up, sweeping the parchment fragment out of his hand. He tries to snatch it back, but the fragment is quickly borne away. He watches it disappear into the sky, then turns back --

Miracia is gone. Blade glances around him, but she's nowhere to be found.

CAMERA PULLS BACK,

isolating Blade amidst the ghostly squalor. From our vantage point, he looks like any other homeless phantom.

INT. WHISTLER'S WORKSHOP - DAWN

Blade steps out from the elevator into the workshop --

The place has been trashed. It looks like a tornado touched down in his absence. Blade pulls out one of his .454s, cautious --

BLADE

WHISTLER?!

-- and then he stops dead in his tracks.

WHISTLER

has been strung up by his arms against the far wall, tortured and left for dead. In response to Blade's voice, a MOAN escapes the dying man's lips.

Blade rushes to the wall, cutting Whistler down with his sword, gently lowering him to the floor. As he cradles the old man in his arms, Blade sees the primary wound -- two ragged puncture marks along Whistler's throat.

BLADE

Jesus, Whistler, what did they do to you?

Whistler opens his eyes, struggling to speak --

WHISTLER

Frost took her --

Whistler spasms and coughs, wincing from the pain.

BLADE

Don't try to talk --

WHISTLER

Listen. You have to -- finish me off.
You don't want me coming back.

BLADE

No, we can treat the wounds --

But Whistler is shaking his hand.

WHISTLER

Too far gone, you know that.

Blade's at a complete loss.

BLADE

Whistler, I can't.

Whistler clutches at Blade's arm, his eyes burning with conviction.

WHISTLER

Yes you can. Now get on with it.

As much as he'd like to deny it, Blade knows that Whistler is right. He pulls a stake from his bandoleer, hesitates.

BLADE

Whistler, I --

WHISTLER

(cutting him off, more gentle now)

I know.

(forcing a smile)

Just be quick about it, will you? Do
it right.

Blade fights back tears. With a wretched moan, he turns his head and drives the stake into Whistler's chest. Whistler GASPS. Blade wraps his arms around the older man, holding him tight as the life runs out of him, rocking back and forth --

After a while, the rocking stops and Blade lays Whistler on the floor. Then something catches his eye --

A SHARP VIEW-CAMCORDER

resting nearby, labeled, "PLAY ME". Blade reaches for the camcorder, cues the tape -- Frost's face appears on the tiny built-in screen.

FROST

Hello, Blade. By the time you watch this, Whistler will no doubt be winging his way to Heaven, thanks to your capable hands. If it makes any difference to you, he put up quite a fight.

Frost touches a deep gash which runs across his cheek.

FROST

Now, I'm sure you're wondering about Ms. Jansen's well-being. She's alive and kicking -- "ambulatory", as they like to say in the trade. Whether or not she remains so is entirely up to you.

(beat)

I'll make this as easy as possible for you, Blade. You can find us at the Edgewood Towers. We'll be waiting with baited breath.

The tape cuts to static. Blade throws the camcorder against the wall. It shatters into a dozen pieces.

Blade turns now, his eyes falling on the medical equipment Karen brought from the hospital. He moves to the refrigerator, removing a canister labeled "SODIUM CITRATE". Then he draws his sword. We can practically see the wheels turning within his mind --

MOMENTS LATER,

Blade stands before the open flames of one of the furnaces, heating his sword in the fire. He withdraws it -- it's molten red.

Blade turns, dousing the molten hot sword into the sodium citrate canister. The refrigerated liquid reacts with the heat, causing the sword to STEAM and HISS.

When Blade withdraws the smoking sword, we SEE that the gleaming steel has changed colors, taking on a bluish tinge, just like the sodium citrate it was immersed in. Blade smiles to himself, satisfied.

CUT TO:

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE, INNER CHAMBER - DAY

Sparse decor in a Neo-Japanese vein. Minimalist lighting. The walls are glass. Recirculating pumps send a constant stream of water cascading down them.

Karen is escorted into the room by Mercury. She gestures to a chair at the end of a long table. Karen sits.

FROST

leans forward out of the shadows, resting his elbows on the table, hands steepled together.

FROST

Well, here we are, Doctor.

A cigarette appears in Frost's hand. In the blink of an eye, the cigarette is lit, burning. The movements are so quick we barely have time to register them.

KAREN

Why haven't you killed me yet?

MERCURY

Deacon likes to play with his food before he eats it.

Frost laughs. Karen tries to keep calm. The longer she keeps them talking, the longer she remains alive.

KAREN

How many of you are there?

FROST

A few thousand scattered about the globe. In the past, we've had to restrict our numbers for fear of discovery. That won't be necessary after tonight.

KAREN

What happens then?

FROST

The Blood Tide. Our long-prophesied

holy war against the humans. There's a force, you see -- a spirit that exists in our blood. I've discovered a way to invoke it.

KAREN

LaMagra --

FROST

That's right. The answers were there all along, of course, scribbled down in the forgotten languages of my kind. Waiting for someone with the patience to decipher them.

My elders were foolish enough to dismiss them as wives tales. But I knew better.

(beat)

Imagine my surprise when Blade turned out to be the key which would set that force free.

Frost sits forward now, impassioned.

FROST

LaMagra isn't a physical being. He's a spirit, requiring a flesh and blood host in order to manifest himself.

KAREN

You.

FROST

Who better to usher in the Blood Tide?

Karen shakes her head, protesting --

KAREN

There's no need for any of this. Your condition can be treated. Whistler and I were working on a cure when --

FROST

What makes you think we want to be cured? Blood is only part of the equation. The hunt, the killing, that's what the Thirst is really about.

KAREN

But you use blood banks --

FROST

Only as a last resort. Preserved blood is inferior. There's no flavor left to it, no life.

(rising from his seat)

Fortunately, I've found a way around
that particular obstacle.

Frost moves to the end of the room. He pushes a button. With a HUM the wall slides open, revealing something Karen wishes she'd never seen -- living blood banks.

THREE SEDATED HUMANS

have been hooked up to IV feeds which replenish various nutrients as their blood is drained from them. Shunts have been implanted in their forearms which serve as taps.

FROST

Under these conditions I can keep a donor alive for years, producing anywhere from fifty to a hundred pints of blood.

(admiring his charges)

Of course, this is just a pilot program, really. Once the Tide comes, we'll need to expand production. So many more mouths to feed --

Karen turns away, overwhelmed by revulsion.

KAREN

You're a monster.

FROST

Why? Because we live at another species' expense? Your people farm cattle and veal, don't they? Fattening them up with steroids? It's called evolution, Doctor. Survival of the fittest.

Frost stares at Karen with an intense, uncompromising gaze.

FROST

I have a wake-up call for the human race. You're no longer at the top of the food chain.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER ROOFTOP - DAY

BLADE'S POV

A telephoto view of Frost's penthouse. The windows are polarized, blocking out the sun's harsh rays.

Blade lowers a pair of binoculars. He's standing on the roof of a building across the street. He hefts an air-launcher rifle up into firing position --

BANG! An iron spike trailing a steel cable rockets through the air between the two buildings, sinking into the concrete facade of

Frost's penthouse. Blade secures his end of the rope. He slips a pulley over the rope, grabs hold of two handles, and leaps off the roof ledge!

WHOOSH! Blade slides towards Frost's penthouse, a good twenty stories above street level. A second before he reaches the windows, Blade lets go. Momentum sends him CRASHING through in a shower of glass.

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

An ALARM is ringing. Sunlight streams in through the broken window. TWO VAMPIRE GUARDS who have been caught in the sudden swath of light are burning up before our eyes. Blade climbs to his feet --

A THIRD VAMPIRE

leaps at him. Blade spins, flipping the vampire over his shoulder, sending him straight through one of the other windows --

EXT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

The vampire tumbles earthward, SCREAMING as the sun's rays ignite his body, falling like a human comet.

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

Blade unsheathes his sword and heads out into the hall --

INT. FROST'S PENTHOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

To Blade's right is the inner chamber with the "waterfall" walls. As ANOTHER VAMPIRE approaches, Blade readies his sword --

VAMPIRE

You think I'm afraid of that toothpick
of yours?

BLADE

You should be. I've made some
improvements.

And with that, Blade thrusts his blackened sword forward, right through the vampire's chest.

The creature SHRIEKS and atomizes -FWOOSH!- flying apart in a fine-beaded spray of blood mist.

Up ahead are a set of steel doors with a time-lock mechanism. Blade draws a Casull, BLASTS away at the lock, then shoulders the doors open --

INT. FROST'S SLEEPING CHAMBER - DAY

We are in a windowless, vault-like room dominated by a series of high-tech STAINLESS STEEL SARCOPHAGI. Think of a hyperbaric coffin, each unit possessing a small face-plate window through which the sleeping subject can be viewed.

Blade unsheathes his sword. He grabs the lid of the first sarcophagus, HEAVING upward. With a PNEUMATIC HISS, the lid rises, belching out a cloud of condensation mist.

As the mist clears, revealing the occupant within, Blade raises his sword, ready to plunge it downward -- only it's not Deacon Frost who rests beneath him, it's --

VANESSA,

Blade's mother!!! Although some thirty years have passed since the events of our prologue, Vanessa looks exactly the same -- vibrant, beautiful, full of life. Her eyes open.

VANESSA

Jason.

Blade gasps, uncomprehending.

BLADE

Mother -- ?!

Vanessa rises from the sarcophagus, tears staining her cheeks.

VANESSA

I've missed you so much, Jason.

(drawing closer)

You have no idea what I've been through, how much I've wanted to see you --

Blade falters, his mind reeling. What he's seeing is incomprehensible -- his mother is dead. Yet, here she is in the flesh, reaching out to him and --

-- flashing a mouthful of viper-like fangs! She SNARLS and strikes, brutally raking her claws across Blade's face, knocking the sword from his grasp --

A TRIO OF BLACK-CLAD VAMPIRES

led by Mercury step from the shadows where they'd been waiting all along. They're armed with tasers which they fire en masse --

Blade is hit by the taser darts from all sides. He writhes as electricity courses through him, then collapses in a heap. He labors to lift his head, looking up at Vanessa --

BLADE

But you -- died --

VANESSA

(a hellish smile)

Deacon brought me back.

BLADE

Fight him --

As if on cue, Frost appears at Vanessa's side, wrapping a proprietary arm about her waist, kissing the nape of her neck. She leans into him -- an act of practiced intimacy.

FROST

She can't. She's one of my thralls now. She has about as much free will as a puppet on a string.

(looking at Vanessa)

You love me, don't you, Vanessa?

VANESSA

Yes.

Frost kisses Vanessa hungrily. Then he kneels and reaches into Blade's jacket, retrieving a vial of Blade's serum.

FROST

What do we have here? Your precious serum? I don't think you'll be needing this anymore.

Frost crushes the vial in his fist. Blade struggles to reach Frost, stretching a palsied hand upwards --

BLADE

Please --

VANESSA

Listen to your father, Jason. It's going to be a better world.

Blade stares at Vanessa uncomprehending.

FROST

Don't look so surprised, Blade. You've spent your life looking for the vampire who fathered you. Well you can rest easy now, you've found him.

(gripping Blade's chin)

Daddy's here.

Blade's eyes widen in shock. Frost simply laughs.

FROST

It's true, Blade. You've got my blood running through your veins.

(smiling)

Thirty years ago. A moonlit street, a woman on her way home alone. You were conceived the night I tore my fangs into your mother's flesh.

Frost swings his fist into Blade's skull. Everything goes black.

CUT TO:

INT. ARMORED TRUCK - NIGHT

FADE IN as Blade opens his eyes, still groggy, his face beaded with sweat. Feverish. His hands have been bound tightly behind his back with manacles and chains.

KAREN

sits nearby, watching him. From the steady rocking motion and the SOUNDS of traffic outside, it's evident that they are in the back of a moving truck.

KAREN

Are you all right?

BLADE

(weakly)
I've been better --

BLADE

How long have we been driving?

KAREN

(shaking her head)
I don't know. I woke up just before
you did --

As he struggles to sit up, she crosses over to him. Blade shuts his eyes for a moment, fighting a wave of pain.

KAREN

Is it bad?

BLADE

(nodding)
We get out of this alive, maybe I'll
take that miracle cure of yours.

Karen doesn't respond. Instead she looks away. How in the world is she supposed to tell him this?

KAREN

(quietly)
It won't work on you.

BLADE

What are you talking about?

Karen forces herself to meet his gaze.

KAREN

Your condition's congenital, the
genetic mutations occurred in utero.
All the other victims contracted
vampirism after birth.

Blade stares at Karen, disbelieving. Who could imagine a more horrifying irony? She's crying now. She can't help it.

KAREN

I can't cure you, Blade. I can cure myself, but I can't cure you.

(beat)

I'm so sorry.

Blade's head sinks, the last vestiges of hope draining out of him.

And then, as if the final stake were being pounded in, the truck lurches to a stop. We hear the ENGINE being killed, then FOOTSTEPS approaching, and then a series of BOLTS BEING SHIFTED as --

-- the back of the truck is thrown open. Frost stands there, grinning, flanked by Mercury, Quinn, Vanessa, and a half-dozen other **VAMPIRE ASSOCIATES**.

FROST

Welcome home, children.

EXT. THE BANK OF EREBUS - NIGHT

Blade and Karen are dragged from the back of the truck, which is revealed now to be an armored car.

THE BANK OF EREBUS

rises up before them. A towering beaux-arts edifice situated in the heart of the city's high-priced financial district -- one of the many institutions owned and operated by the vampire enclave.

Frost starts up the marble steps towards a grand, triple-arched entrance flanked by Corinthian columns. Karen and Blade are dragged along after him.

INT. BANK OF EREBUS - ATRIUM - NIGHT

Frost leads his vampires into a high-ceilinged atrium, moving towards a bank of elevators -- one of the doors of which is outfitted with a high-tech hand-key ID system.

Frost places his palm on the ID screen. The screen GLOWS GREEN, acknowledging his identity. In response, the doors HISS open.

INT. SECURITY ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Blade and Karen are pulled inside the elevator. The control panel buttons have vampire glyphs, rather than numbers. Frost presses the bottom one. The doors close with a WHOOSH and the car descends -- down, down, down.

Frost glances over at Karen, smiling amiably.

FROST

On its surface, this building houses
one of the city's oldest financial
institutions -- and for over
two-hundred years its served our
corporate needs. Look beneath the
surface, however, and you'll discover
another truth entirely --

The elevator CHIMES, having arrived at its destination. The doors
HISS open, revealing

INT. THE TEMPLE OF NIGHT

A vast, barrel-vaulted chamber lined with recessed tombs stretches
out before us -- an underground cathedral of sorts, wrought from
alabaster and marble. Restrained. Elegant. Replete with dark
splendor.

FROST

As above, so below.

Torches burn in wall sconces, casting everything in a warm, amber
glow. Frost takes in the beauty of the place.

FROST

Welcome to our hall of ancients,
Doctor. We call it the Temple of
Night.

Blade and Karen are led to the middle of the room, where a stone
altar rises up from a dais. Blade is roughly thrown to the ground. He
kneels there, eyes cast downward. Broken. His system being assaulted
by the devastating effects of the Thirst.

Quinn and Mercury pick their way through Blade's discarded gear.
Quinn picks up the punching dagger, admiring it.

Frost turns to Mercury, who's been holding Blade's scabbarded sword.

FROST

Let's see this sword of his.

Mercury draws the sword, handing it to Frost. He sights down the
length of it, testing its weight. With a flick of his wrist, he
lashes out, slashing Blade's cheek open.

FROST

Still quite sharp, I see.

Blade feebly struggles to rise. Frost clubs him on the back of the
neck with the sword pommel. Blade crumples. Karen tries to pull free,
but Quinn holds her tight.

KAREN

Blade --

FROST

You're wasting your breath, woman. He can't hear you now. It's the Thirst, you see? It already has him in its grip.

Frost reaches down, dragging Blade's head up by his hair. Karen watches on as Frost continues to taunt him.

FROST

How long has it been since you had your serum? Twelve hours? More? You must be quite thirsty by now.

He crouches down so he's eye to eye with Blade.

FROST

What does it feel like? Is your blood on fire? Are you burning up inside? Give in to the Thirst, Blade. Embrace your true nature.

Blade shivers, grits his teeth, it's like he's going through heroin withdrawal.

BLADE

-- go to hell --

Frost smiles, his eyes burning with an infernal glow.

FROST

I've got news for you, Blade. We're already here.

Frost turns to the others, motioning.

FROST

Take him to the sanctuary. It's time he was bled.

The other vampires retreat, dragging Blade along with them. Karen is left alone with Frost and Quinn.

FROST

I'd let you watch the proceedings, Doctor, but I'm afraid that privilege is reserved for members of my own race. Don't worry, though, I've made alternate arrangements for you.

Frost motions and Quinn drags Karen towards --

THE MOUTH OF A PIT

some forty feet deep, its lichen-encrusted stone walls worn smooth over time. As Frost gestures to the yawning darkness beneath them, Quinn forces Karen towards the edge.

FROST

We call this the Bone Pit. It's where we keep our mistakes, the ones who couldn't successfully make the transition from human to vampire.

Frost reaches out, caressing Karen's neck, puncturing the soft flesh beneath her chin with a razored fingernail.

FROST

They'll feed on anything, given the chance -- animals, corpses, even other vampires.

Frost nods. Karen struggles against Quinn, but it's no good. In a manner of seconds, she's falling --

INT. BONE PIT - NIGHT

-- making a decidedly rough landing on a heap of bones far below. She GROANS, taking stock of her battered body.

UP ABOVE,

Deacon watches from the lip of the pit, amused.

FROST

Of course, a strapping young woman like yourself -- well I think you just might be considered finger food.

And with that, he's gone, stepping away from the pit.

INT. TEMPLE OF NIGHT - BLEEDING CHAMBER - NIGHT

We are in a small, elevated antechamber which is situated above the main vampire sanctuary.

BLADE,

now weakened to the point of collapse, is being lashed to a rack-like device by iron chains.

Mercury and her cohorts move efficiently, quickly securing him. When they are through, the rack is hoisted up into the air via a series of winch-driven chains.

With every turn of the winch crank, the chains are drawn tighter, causing Blade to CRY OUT, until at last, he is suspended in mid-air, spread-eagle.

FROST

approaches, still carrying Blade's sword.

FROST

It's been a long road, hasn't it? Such

a pity Whistler led you so far astray.

Frost cocks his head to the side, studying Blade's face.

FROST

I don't blame you, though. I want you to know that. Even after all you've done. I understand, Blade, I really do. It's the human side of you which has corrupted your reasoning, made you weak. But we'll take care of that, won't we?

Blade struggles to lift his head, forcing himself to match Frost's gaze, shaking with hatred.

BLADE

I'd kill myself -- before I turned into something like you.

Frost just smiles and shakes his head.

FROST

No you wouldn't. I'm going to bleed you dry, Blade. All the poison that makes you human.

(drawing closer)

When the Tide comes, you'll be begging me put you through the Change.

Frost lifts up Blade's sword, methodically slitting Blade's wrists one by one. He makes the cuts lengthwise, opening up the cephalic and basilic veins with surgical precision.

Blood wells up from the fresh wounds, running down Blade's forearms, collecting in a cistern beneath his feet.

Frost watches the steady, inexorable process, then nods, satisfied. He looks to the others who are gathered behind him, watching on with silent reverence.

FROST

It's done. We should ready ourselves for the ritual of invocation.

Frost leads Mercury, Quinn, and the others from the sanctuary.

Blade struggles futilely against his bonds, crying out in frustration, his body eventually sagging from exhaustion.

VANESSA (O.S.)

There's no use fighting us, Jason.

Blade looks up, focusing now on --

VANESSA,

who has remained behind. Blade stares at her. As terrible as his physical torment is, his mother's betrayal is infinitely worse.

BLADE

How could you be a part of this?

VANESSA

These are my people now. I'm one of them.

BLADE

You don't have to be.

VANESSA

You don't understand. I've killed, I've hunted, and I've enjoyed it.

She draws closer, caressing her son's face. There's just a hint of creepy eroticism in her action, a dash of incest.

VANESSA

I wish you could see the world as I do. Deacon opened my eyes. There's no turning back from that.

BLADE

I don't believe that.

VANESSA

You will. Time is on our side. Sooner or later, the Thirst always wins.

Vanessa turns away now. Blade cries after her --

BLADE

Mother!

Vanessa pauses, looking back, smiling cruelly.

VANESSA

Your mother died the night you were born.

And with that, she's gone, melting into the shadows.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BONE PIT - NIGHT

Karen rises, wary, taking in her shadowed surroundings.

HEAPS OF HUMAN BONES

are piled against the pit walls -- skulls, rib-cages, femurs, tibias -- all picked clean of flesh. Some of the skulls have large, canine-like fangs -- the remnants, no doubt, of long-deceased vampires.

Suddenly we hear a WHISPER of sorts, the soft CLINKING of bone fragments grinding together --

Karen spins, trying to place the source of the sound. Then she hears the SOUND again. Behind her now, closer.

REVENANT (O.S.)

Karennnnnn --

Karen looks up with a growing sense of dread.

A FACE

emerges from the darkness. Pallid, cadaverous, shedding its desiccated flesh. Lidless eyes like black marbles slick with Vaseline. A mouth like a raw wound.

REVENANT

Karreennnnnn. I never thought I'd see
you againnnnn.

Karen backs away, realizing who she's standing before.

KAREN

Curtis?!

What used to be Curtis SNARLS, knocking Karen back into the drift-pile of bones. It pins her to the ground, kneeling above her, gurgling through its gutted trachea.

CURTIS REVENANT

Tell, me, Karennn -- ever have second
thoughts -- about us?

Karen SCREAMS, trying to force the revenant away from her, but it lunges closer, lolling its distended tongue over her mouth in a pathetic approximation of a French kiss.

She fumbles behind her, choking, grabbing hold of a human femur, blindly swinging it upward --

CRACK! The blow shatters the Curtis-thing's jaw. It rears back, falling to the side.

Karen crawls out from under its weight, swinging the femur again and again --

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! Karen pummels the howling horror, driving it back until the femur actually splinters in half. The creature's head hangs at an awkward angle now, its neck broken -- but still it advances, dragging itself back up.

Sobbing, Karen retreats, clutching the splintered femur like a makeshift dagger.

Curtis charges at her, a blur of slashing claws. At the last moment, Karen ducks, thrusting the bone dagger up into Curtis' chest --

Curtis impales himself, right through the heart. For one split-second, his eyes widen in surprise --

-- and then he goes into a death-spasm, vomiting up a spray of caustic vampire blood-bile, splattering Karen. She sinks to her knees, GASPING, as the thing that used to be Curtis shrivels up, melting away into burbling puddle.

After a beat, Karen rises and moves to the pit wall, running her hands over the lichen-slick surface, searching for a way out. The mortar between the brickwork is ancient, crumbling.

Karen looks to the ground, reaching for one of the splintered femurs. She pounds it into the mortar between two bricks -- and it holds, working as a makeshift piton.

Karen reaches for another broken femur, lodging it a foot above the first. She hauls her body up now, suspending her weight from the two makeshift pitons. Again, they hold.

Trembling from exertion, Karen pulls the right piton free, hanging solely from her left hand now. Though her handhold is precarious, she manages to swing the right hand up again, pounding that piton another foot above the left.

In this slow, torturous manner, Karen begins to climb her way up out of the pit.

INT. TEMPLE OF NIGHT - BLEEDING CHAMBER - NIGHT

Blade hangs from his chains, head slack, eyes half-lidded and lusterless. His skin has grown ashen as his life's blood has been bled away.

Mercury appears before him, accompanied by Quinn. She bends in close to kiss Blade lightly on the lips.

MERCURY

It won't be long now, lover.

Quinn draws alongside her, hefting Blade's punching dagger. He places it against Blade's throat, slowly applying pressure. At this point, Blade's too weak to even resist.

QUINN

We should finish him off.

MERCURY

(shaking her head)

No. Deacon wants him turned.

Quinn releases Blade, disgusted.

QUINN

Fucking waste, if you ask me.

As Mercury and Quinn exit, the CAMERA DROPS DOWN to the cistern beneath Blade's feet. We follow the blood which has collected there as it flows into a crude drain and --

INT. SANCTUARY - NIGHT

-- emerges from the ceiling of the sanctuary below. The stream of blood is directed down the channels of a spiral column, where it finally pools into a waiting chalice.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

the sanctuary in full. A large circular chamber, the perimeter of which is lined with recessed alcoves housing the remains of the vampire ancients, set into the sanctuary walls like cells in a hive.

DEACON FROST

stands in the center of the chamber, allowing Vanessa to clothe him in ceremonial regalia -- gleaming, centuries-old armor. He pauses, kissing her hungrily.

Having finished suiting up, he turns to face the vampires who have been faithful to his cause -- Mercury, Quinn, a host of others. A hush settles upon them. There's an excitement in the air, a sense that something remarkable is about to happen.

FROST

Tonight is the night we've waited our
entire lives for. Tonight, the
blood-dimmed Tide is loosed upon the
world. Tonight, the Age of Man comes
to an end.

The vampires bellow out a CHORUS OF CHEERS, their voices resonating off the stone walls like thunder.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE OF NIGHT - BONE PIT - NIGHT

Karen's hands appear over the lip of the bone pit. She heaves herself up, collapsing onto the floor --

-- but there's no time to rest. Even now she can hear the VAMPIRES CHEERING. She drags herself to her feet, letting the voices guide her.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Karen slips around a corner, guarded, searching. She SEES Blade strung up before her, seemingly lifeless.

Karen studies the chains which bind Blade, following them back to their source at the winch. She releases the brake on the winch crank,

sending the chains RATTLING down through the overhead pulleys which suspend them.

Blade crumples to the floor, lying still. Karen is at his side in an instant --

KAREN

(whispering, urgent)

Blade.

Blade's eyes flicker open, fixing on her. Inhuman. He's shaking like an alcoholic going into delirium tremens.

INT. TEMPLE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Vanessa hands Frost the chalice containing Blade's blood. He lifts it up for all to see. The vampires begin to chant en masse, some long-forgotten invocation in the vampire tongue.

FROST

(grinning, to himself)

"And what rough beast, its hour come
round at last, slouches towards
Bethlehem to be born?"

Frost lifts the chalice to his lips and begins to drink.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Blade tries to sit up, gripping Karen's wrist --

BLADE

Get out of here --

KAREN

I'm not leaving without you.

BLADE

You don't understand. The Thirst --

He clutches his stomach, experiencing phenomenal pain.

BLADE

(gasping)

-- tearing me -- apart.

KAREN

I know. Take some of my blood.

BLADE

No --

KAREN

It's the only way. You know that.
We'll never get out of here alive if

you don't.

Blade suppresses a shudder. Simply keeping himself from attacking her takes every ounce of his resolve.

BLADE

I can't -- I won't be able to stop --

KAREN

Yes you will. The human side of you is stronger. I know it is.

Karen matches Blade's gaze, steeling herself. The truth is, she's terrified.

Blade stares back at her. At this moment, he wants what Karen is offering more than anything he's ever desired. And so he rises --

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE OF NIGHT - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Frost continues drinking down the blood, when suddenly, a force seizes his body. He throws his head back, eyes rolling to white, flinging the chalice aside.

And as the vampire incantation reaches a fevered pitch, we SEE the stone tomb tablets off the vampire ancestors beginning to judder -- as if some force within were trying to break free --

CUT TO:

INT. ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Karen turns her head to the side, baring her neck, offering herself to Blade. Blade opens his mouth. His canines elongate. He lowers his head --

-- and starts to feed. Karen involuntarily stiffens as Blade's teeth puncture her skin and we --

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Frost shakes, possessed by an unseen force. A wind picks up from nowhere, swirling about the chamber, accompanied by a strange **HUMMING**.

Suddenly, one of the tombs BURSTS OPEN. A WRAITH-LIKE SPIRIT rushes outward in a fountain of light, penetrating Frost's body.

Then ANOTHER TOMB SPLITS APART. Then ANOTHER, and ANOTHER -- until a torrent of SPIRIT-WRAITHS are surging into Frost, buffeting him about like a scarecrow in a cyclone.

Mercury, Vanessa, and the other vampires back away, apprehensive,

humbled by what they're witnessing.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Blade moans, sinking his teeth deeper. Karen's head rolls back. Her eyes open -- glassy, unseeing -- as a wave of ecstasy overtakes her.

She shudders, her breath quickening, falling into a synchronous rhythm with Blade's. Her fingers dig deep into his back, clawing downward, tearing into him --

She's not Karen anymore -- she's a red blood cell, an erythrocyte, spinning in a river of plasma, roaring up Blade's femoral artery, racing towards the pumping chambers of his heart which beats like the deafening breath of God, which blots all other sounds out of existence and we're --

CUTTING BACK AND FORTH NOW

between Frost's transformation and Blade's, each of them growing stronger by the second, caught in an ever-increasing feedback loop of expanding energy until --

BLADE

NO!!!!

Blade tears himself from Karen, his pulse racing as --

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

-- the invocation of LaMagra reaches critical mass. Frost is consumed by a hellish force, unable to withstand the onslaught of spirit energy any longer.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

-- Karen clawing at Blade, tears streaming down her cheeks.

KAREN

Don't stop --

But Blade grips her by her shoulders, shoving her back. Karen stares at Blade, wide-eyed, as if waking from a trance. She touches the raw wounds on her neck, shaken --

KAREN

My God --

Blade rises to his full height. His strength has more than returned, it's been doubled by the infusion of real blood. And there's something else in his gaze now too -- an animal fury that was missing

before. Blade has taken one giant step closer to the darkness.

KAREN

(hesitant)

Are you -- all right?

Blade pulls at the chains manacled to his wrists, SNAPPING them apart like toys. He flexes his hands -- fingernails lengthening to tapered points. And he smiles, offering us a view of his canines, which have elongated into fangs.

BLADE

(near-demonic)

Never been better.

INT. TEMPLE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

The aftermath. Smoke hangs heavy in the air, occluding the area where Frost had stood. As it dissipates, Mercury and the others creep forward, apprehensive --

MERCURY

Deacon?

FROST

stands with his back to us, his body trailing wisps of occult fumes. As he slowly turns, we catch a glimpse of his eyes -- burning with an awesome, inner fire.

FROST

No longer.

BLADE (O.S.)

Frost!!!

All heads turn --

BLADE

stands at the balcony overhead, Karen at his side. He leaps from it, somersaulting down to the floor below, landing on his feet like a predatory cat.

BLADE

Who dies first?

FROST

(growling, to the others)

Take him.

Quinn GROWLS, stepping forward, armed with Blade's punching dagger. He offers his second "new hand" up for view.

QUINN

Grew another hand for you sweetmeat --
(tossing the dagger to his new hand)

-- and now I'm gonna kill you with it.

Quinn charges. Blade meets the vampire head-on, dropping into a low kick and sweeping the vampire's legs out from under him. He spins behind Quinn --

BLADE

Let's see if you can grow a new one
of these!

Blade hooks a finger through the metal ring at the end of his jacket sleeve, pulling out a retractable strangle-wire which he twists around Quinn's throat.

Blade tightens the wire, decapitating Quinn. The headless body staggers about, then drops to the cavern floor. Blade scoops up his punching dagger --

BLADE

Next?

Mercury and the other faithful vampires charge en masse. Blade launches a spinning wheel kick into the first vamp's face, SNAPPING its neck --

Mercury has Blade's .454 Casulls. She aims them at him --

MERCURY

Have a taste of your own medicine!

As she FIRES, Blade tucks and rolls, knocking one of the guns from her hand. The guns spins across the floor, where it's scooped up by --

KAREN,

who takes aim at an approaching vamp, BLOWING it away.

Meanwhile, Blade traps Mercury's other hand, disarming her, flipping her over his shoulder. He hefts his Casull, BLASTING her into eternity --

A bloodbath ensues. Blade moves like speed-personified, FIRING off one, two, THREE HEADSHOTS with brain-numbing accuracy, cutting down the vampires where they stand.

It's an orgy of gunpowder smoke and showering bodily fluids and -CLICK-CA-CHING-CLICK!- Blade and Karen have spent their bullets and --

FROST (O.S.)

Enough!!!

Blade turns to face --

FROST,

who's advancing, clutching Blade's own sword in his hand. He thrusts the sword forward --

Blade presses the grip-trigger on his punching dagger -CHING!- the two side blades spread out. We hear the RASP and CLANG of metal on metal as Blade manages to trap the sword-point between two of the dagger blades --

For a moment, both men are eye to eye, their weapons locked together, then, Frost forces Blade backwards --

What happens next is the most blindingly-fast sword fight ever exposed to celluloid. Both men, fueled by super-human speed, lunge and spin across the cavern floor in a blurred ballet of lethal moves.

Frost lands a powerful blow on Blade's shoulder, the sword-edge biting deep into the flesh. Blade SCREAMS. Frost withdraws the sword for another strike --

-- until Blade sees an opening and takes it, slicing Frost's left arm off at the shoulder --

The severed arm releases Blade's sword, but the arm doesn't fall! To Frost and Blade's mutual surprise the arm floats in mid-air, bleeding red, quivering like zero-G liquid, then SLURPING back to Frost's arm-stump to re-attach itself!

Undaunted, Blade slices the punching dagger into Frost's mid-section, meeting only liquid-like resistance. The moment Blade withdraws his dagger, Frost's flesh seals itself up again.

Blade hesitates now, uncertain -- and Frost laughs, understanding what has happened.

FROST

You're too late, Blade. I'm already changing. Don't you see? The Sleeper has awakened. I'm not just Frost anymore. I'm becoming a god now, blood incarnate.

Even as Frost utters the words, his body begins to ripple and morph, bleeding red, taking on the characteristics of liquid. He doesn't walk so much now as flow. He's become a three-dimensional creature of animated blood! A blood demon.

ON KAREN,

as she watches Frost's transformation, wide-eyed. She SEES Blade's discarded sword, reaches for it -- suddenly, a SHADOW moves on the periphery of her vision --

VANESSA

rushes at Karen in a near-blur. The SNARLING hellion is upon Karen in an eye-blink, SLAMMING her down against the temple floor, pinning her.

VANESSA

Did you think I'd forgotten you, you
little whore?

BACK TO FROST,

who towers above Blade, swaying back and forth in his new, liquid-like form.

FROST

You can't hurt me anymore.

WHOOSH! Frost rises upwards on a spiraling column of blood, HOWLING WITH LAUGHTER, then just as suddenly --

-- splashes back to earth, spreading out in a widening pool. In the blink of an eye, he streams through Blade's feet, re-solidifying behind Blade. Blade spins, swings his dagger --

Once again, Frost morphs into blood-form. He races around Blade in a series of spouting arcs, turning from blood-form to solid and back again in a series of split-second transformations.

Blade whirls, striking with his dagger and missing every time --

WHOOSH! Frost suddenly dissipates, SPLASHING away into a million zero-G blood bubbles, vanishing. Blade spins, unnerved, trying to pin-point his foe's next manifestation.

BLADE

Where are you?!

Frost's voice answers from all directions.

FROST

Everywhere.

A DROPLET OF BLOOD

spatters the floor at Blade's feet. Blade looks up --

A SHOWER OF BLOOD

rains from above, coalescing into Frost as he sweeps down on Blade like a giant bird of prey, crushing him against the temple floor.

FROST

You want my blood so much?! Take it!

Frost's arms elongate and liquefy, flowing into two snake-like spouts of blood -- the rest of Frost remains solid. The blood-spouts twist around Blade's neck, melding together, completely encasing Blade's head in a bubble of blood.

Blade claws at the blood-bubble as if it were a solid object that he could dislodge, but his fingers just pass through it!

BACK TO VANESSA

as she wraps a hand around Karen's throat, choking her.

As Karen struggles, she frees a hand, sliding it down to her hip pocket, digging something out -- Whistler's vampire mace canister!

She forces it up between them, triggering a jet of TOXIC MIST into Vanessa's face --

Vanessa recoils, HOWLING, her head smoking as if it were doused with formic acid, skin sloughing off from her skull. Karen lunges for Blade's sword --

BACK TO FROST AND BLADE

Blade is drowning in Frost's blood. His eyes bulge. Oxygen bubbles stream from his mouth. Frost leans in close, his face a twisted mask of insanity.

FROST

I was wrong about you, Blade. You were never one of us. You're a traitor to your race.

KAREN (O.S.)

Get away from him!

Frost looks up -- Karen is wielding Blade's sword. She brings it down on Frost, severing the blood-tendrils which envelope Blade. The blood-bubble dissolves instantly, flowing away from Blade's face. He gasps, chokes in air --

Frost backs away, horrified. His blood-tendrils don't reform. Instead, the lay where they fell, solidifying into crystalline powder.

KAREN

Blade!

Karen flings the sword at Blade.

THE SWORD

spins end over end, its mirrored surface reflecting coruscating pinwheels of candlelight as Blade catches the weapon by its hilt.

Blade rises, advancing on Frost, sword outstretched and Frost retreats, uncertain now.

BLADE

Guess you're not quite as invulnerable as you thought.

FROST

You're wrong -- a few minutes more, and

my transition will be complete. Even
your sword won't be able to affect me
then.

BLADE

You don't have a few minutes, Frost.

Frost eyes Blade warily, then lunges towards Vanessa, sweeping behind her. Blade follows, but even as he raises his sword to strike, Frost spins Vanessa around, using her body as a shield!

Blade hesitates, stopping the sword in mid-strike, catching his mother's gaze -- her face is monstrous now, scarred by Karen's poisonous mace. Piteous, really.

Frost smiles, for he's found a final weakness of Blade's to exploit.

FROST

(laughing cruelly)

Just as I thought. Still chained to
your mother's breast after all these
years.

In the same instant, Vanessa's features morph, taking on the angelic, youthful vibrancy she possessed in the locket photo.

FROST

(gloating)

You're too human, Blade.

BLADE

(steeling himself)

It's because I'm human that I can do
this.

Frost's eyes widen in shock, but he has no time to react, for --

Blade is already LUNGING forward, driving the sword-point through Vanessa's chest, on into Frost's heart! It strikes the stone behind them, SHATTERING and --

Frost and Vanessa HOWL AS ONE, their SCREAMS rising to an unendurable intensity as the two vampires go nova, exploding into an expanding ball of light and ATOMIZING BLOOD.

Blade is thrown back off his feet, having to shield his eyes from the backlash of occult energy as a near tidal WAVE of blood surges over him --

EXT. BANK OF EREBUS - CITY STREET - NIGHT

Every door and window of the bank is BLOWN OUTWARD from the force of the EXPLOSION. While along the street, manhole covers flip from their moorings, spinning up into the air like dimes, being buoyed by geysers of blood.

INT. TEMPLE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Silence, just the steady DRIP-DRIP of liquid draining. The underworld temple gleams with a crimson sheen now.

ON BLADE

as he stirs. He's been blown clear across the sanctuary by the force of the blast, soaked to the quick by blood. He rises to his feet, retrieving the hilt of his shattered weapon. At his feet --

THE SWORDBLADE

lies in pieces. Amidst them, we find the singed remains of the locket -- Vanessa's face barely recognizable beneath the grime. Blade stoops to pick it up.

KAREN (O.S.)

Blade?

Blade turns. Karen moves to him, searching his eyes. Which side of Blade's soul has won out? Human or vampire?

Then she SEES the tears rimming Blade's eyes, the first he's shed in a lifetime. Human.

They embrace, holding each other that way for a long, long time. And we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP, BANK OF EREBUS - DAWN

Blade and Karen stand on the rooftop, watching as dawn slowly creeps across the silent city.

KAREN

I never imagined I'd be so happy to
see the sun rise --
(turning to him)
It's over, isn't it?

BLADE

For them. But for me --

He lifts his face towards the rising sun, letting its warmth wash over his upturned face.

BLADE

I feel like it's finally beginning.

And on that note we leave them -- TWO FIGURES, silhouetted against the new day.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

