

CIRQUE DU FREAK

Written by

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FADE IN:

CLOSE ON a spectacular example of PEUCETIA VIRIDANS. Descending through mid-air on a silken thread. Neon green with black leopard spots on its legs. A Green Lynx Spider. As we follow it down, the threaded opening of a GLASS JAR appears from the bottom of frame. Just before the spider continues inside the jar, it stops, suspended. Something's not right. It waves a leg tentatively through the air...

DARREN'S VOICE

Come on... Just a little lower...
WIDEN TO REVEAL a Middle School TOILET STALL. Standing on the lid of the closed toilet, holding the glass jar up over his head, is DARREN SHAN.
Darren is 14 and a well-liked kid. Tenacious. Diligent.
The spider just hangs there.

DARREN

Come on... I'll take good care of you. All the bugs you can eat.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS ROOM

The door bangs open and STEVE LEONARD enters. Unlike Darren, Steve's not so well-liked. In fact, he can be trouble. Maybe that's why they're friends.

STEVE

Hey, Darren!
No answer. Steve walks along the stall, scoots low so he can see any feet in front of the bowls.

STEVE

Did you fall in? Darren!

DARREN'S VOICE

Shhh...
Steve looks to the last stall, sees the jar being held up.

INTERCUT from in and outside of the stall.

DARREN

You're gonna scare him away.

2.

STEVE

Man, we're getting killed out there. It's three to nothing. Darren is all concentration as the spider drops a little.

DARREN

Your problem, Steve, not mine... Steve gets a waggish idea. Stepping to the sink, pressing his forefinger over the spigot, he turns the faucet. WATER SHOOTS out in a stream, which Steve directs into and then over the stall door. Reacting, the spider zips up its thread, is lost in the darkened ceiling. The stall door opens. Dripping water, Darren stares at Steve who flashes a wicked grin...

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Kids eat lunch, off in their groups. On the field: Darren has a SOCCER BALL practically glued to his foot. He dribbles through defenders, shoots, SCORES! Steve pumps a fist:

STEVE

GOAL! Three to one! The other team regroups, starts back upfield with the ball. Darren steals it. A few strides and WHUMP! Darren catches the goalie too far out. The ball lofts just over the backpedaling goalie's head, bounces into the goal.

STEVE

(EXULTANT)

Three to two! Angry at himself, the goalie KICKS the ball away. It veers off toward the street. Steve takes it as a personal insult.

STEVE

What does that prove? Huh?
The goalie blanches as Steve moves at him. Kids are nervous about Steve. He likes to fight. Darren gets between them.

DARREN

Go get the ball. It's 3 to 2.
Lunch's almost over.

3.

STEVE

That's why he kicked it. To kill time. Well, I still got time to kick your face.

DARREN

(BLOCKING HIM)

Forget it. The ball.
Steve decides, heads after it. The goalie gulps in relief.

GOALIE

Thanks, Darren. He's crazy.
Darren watches after Steve. He does have a vicious streak.

THE STREET

Steve tracks down the ball which has rolled into the street. From seemingly out of nowhere...
A gleaming black 1966 LINCOLN Continental. Its tires sucking at the asphalt as it rolls. The windows blacked out.
It speeds up reaching the ball. Ba-Dump! The ball BURSTS.

STEVE

You idiot!
The car SCREECHES to a stop, idles ominously. Suddenly Steve doesn't seem so tough. He looks nervously back to Darren. But as a WIND picks up, the Lincoln suddenly tears off. A sheet of PAPER is kicked up by one of the car tires. The wind sends it sailing. It drifts down, until... Steve notices, snatches it out of the air.
Darren steps up beside him, watches the Lincoln disappear down the street. Creepy...

STEVE

Look at this.

The paper is a FLYER. A startling, violent layout. Beneath a snarling WOLF'S HEAD: CROUE DU FREAK - Human oddities and other living curiosities. Midnight. Zeiterion Theater. \$20 - Admission is at the discretion of the proprietor.

STEVE

.Human oddities and other living curiosities...

(TO DARREN)

Other. Does that mean not human?

4.

Darren shrugs, takes the flyer.

DARREN

A freak show. Ever been to one?

STEVE

(GRINS)

Just this school.

Darren turns the flyer over. There are tire tracks on the back. They hear the sound of distant tire squeals, but the Lincoln is long out of view. Just an empty street now...

CUT TO:

A BOA OCCIDENTALIS

Probing the confines of its glass prison. A BOA CONSTRICTOR by any other name. It's a prison within a prison because we're inside...

THE SCHOOL SCIENCE LAB - DAY

The teacher, MR. DALTON, moves ponderously around the room. His voice like a metronome.

MR. DALTON

As you can see reptiles and amphibians are not one in the same.

As Mr. Dalton continues, we see various PAIRS OF STUDENTS, their computer screens showing text or pictures of various

FROGS, ALLIGATORS and LIZARDS...
DARREN and STEVE sit together staring at a Komodo Dragon.
After Mr. Dalton passes by, Steve switches screen views.
He's done a WebSearch of Cirque du Freak. There are a dozen
or so entries. He picks one: History of the Side Show.
Under 1920's there's an older, much more 'Victorian'

pamphlet

for the Cirque du Freak. A more ornate version of the same
Wolf Head. The same notice from the proprietor.
Steve spreads the flyer out to compare. They whisper:

STEVE

1923...

DARREN

Must be a different one.
Steve scrolls down through pictures:

5.

Sword swallower and glass eater: OHIO GRAY.
Frog boy: AVERY CHILDS.
Human skeleton: J.D. COMBS. .and then...
Egyptian Soothsayer: LARTEN CREPSLEY. Crepsley's gaze is
startling. Like he can see through the screen, even from
1923. Steve looks like he's just seen a ghost.
Suddenly, he hits print. As a PRINTER against the wall
clicks to life, Steve looks back at Darren.

STEVE

I gotta show you something...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SHAN HOUSE - DAY

Picture perfect: two stories, dormers, trellises. 9-year-old
ANNIE rides up on her bike, bookbag over her shoulder.
Without stopping, she hops off, dumps it on the lawn by two
other bikes. A few steps and she's through the door.

CUT TO:

INT. DARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Moody for the daytime. Only the light from the half-closed blinds streaking the floor where:
Darren and Steve are huddled over several clippings and pictures that Steve has spread out. They all deal with VAMPIRES in some form or another. Steve pulls another stack from his backpack, spreads them out as well.

DARREN

I don't get it.

STEVE

Vampires. I've been studying them.
Vampires? Darren looks at him a beat.

DARREN

Right. You're failing half your classes at school, but you're studying vampires.

STEVE

They been around 1000's of years.
Two tribes. They even fight wars.

6.

DARREN

What? When?

STEVE

Okay, sometimes, when humans fight? They fight at the same time. And no one knows it. Like at the Battle of Stalingrad they fought at the same time the Russians and Germans were fighting.
Darren just looks at him, wonders if he's serious.

STEVE

Some people know about it. There have even been books written.
He pulls a frayed old yellow hardcover from his bag.

DARREN

That's your proof? It smells.
Steve's really trying to convince him now.

STEVE

It's everywhere if you look. On
the internet, in blogs, newspapers,
weird places. But you can find it.
The room starts to tighten a notch around them.

STEVE

I chatted online with one of them.

DARREN

Come on.

STEVE

Serious.
We become aware of...

A SINISTER POV

Someone watching Darren and Steve through the half open
doorway. It moves in, starts coming up from behind.

DARREN

What was his name? Mr. Dracula?
Mad now, Steve opens the book, flips pages, finds an old
Century painting. He slaps down the science lab internet
print-out of Larten Crepsley. It's the same guy! Maybe...

19th

7.

STEVE

Here he is in 1923. And here 1855.
Huh? Maybe he'll be there tonight.
Would that make you believe?
As Darren looks them over, the POV looms up behind them.
Suddenly Darren spins...
And ROARS at what's behind them: his sister Annie. She
SCREAMS in response. Steve jumps a mile. Darren LAUGHS.

ANNIE

How'd you know?

DARREN

Saw your shadow on the floor.
Gotta try harder, knucklehead.
Steve snaps his book shut, shoves it in his backpack.

STEVE

I'm gonna get a soda.

DARREN

Get me one, too.
Steve gets up, stomps out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SHAN HOUSE - DAY

Steve opens the refrigerator, looks to see what's in there.
At the same time Darren's MOTHER arrives home. Coming in
through the kitchen door, she sees the refrigerator door
open, two sneakered feet behind it.

MOM

I know you want to fight global
warming, Darren, but that's not the
way to do it.
Steve leans back to show his face.

STEVE

Sorry, Mrs. Shan.

MOM

Oh hi, Steve. I thought you were,
Darren.

8.

STEVE

I wish I was.

(RE: FRIDGE)

You guys got everything in here.

MOM

Help yourself.

She sets her PURSE down on the counter.

MOM

How's your mother?

STEVE

She's okay... She's been working a lot lately.

A little frown of concern crosses Darren's mom. Something about Steve... His mom... He brings out a bottle of soda.

MOM

(POINTS)

Glasses are up there.

STEVE

I know.

Darren's mom exits as Steve pulls down two glasses, starts

to

pour soda. As he waits for the foam to settle, he sees... The purse. Just there. A quick look around, it doesn't take him long to decide. Steve steps over, opens the purse. A quick rifling finds a wallet: \$200 in \$20's. He peels off three bills, shoves them in his pocket. BLLEEEP! A cell phone starts going off in the purse. Fumbling, frantic, Steve stuffs the rest of the money back in the wallet, the wallet back in the purse, closes the purse -- Darren's Mom is back in. She's hurrying to get to her celiphone, so...

MOM

(INTO PHONE)

Hello?

.it takes her a second to realize something's up. Not listening to her call, she watches Steve grab the two

glasses

and hurry out, leaving the soda bottle on the counter and guilt in the air. As she looks over at her purse...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - SHAN HOUSE - DAY

Steve comes up off the stairs. He sets the glasses on a hall table, continues into...

DARREN'S ROOM

Darren's looking through Steve's vampire memorabilia. Steve reaches past, starts packing it up.

STEVE

I gotta go. See ya tonight.

DARREN

Huh? Tonight where?
He zips the bag, slings it over his shoulder.

STEVE

Cirque du Freak.

DARREN

I got no money right now.

STEVE

Don't sweat it. I got money. Meet me ten to Midnight. The Zeiterion Theater.

DARREN

That place is supposed to be haunted.
Steve rolls his eyes, starts out...

DARREN

What am I going to tell my parents?

STEVE

Tell them you're sleeping over. We can meet early, walk over together.

DARREN

I don't know, man...

STEVE

D, it's Cirque du Freak. You wanna hear about it Monday? Or see it tonight?
Steve lets his point sink in, then goes.

CUT TO:

10.

INT. KITCHEN - SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Darren and Annie and his mom and DAD eat dinner. Annie chatters away.

ANNIE

And that's why we need a dog.
She waits for an answer. Mom and Dad exchange a look.

DAD

We'll have to think about it.

ANNIE

How do you guys decide who's going
to say no when you look at each
other.

DAD

Whoever's eyes are the widest. And
I didn't say no. Yet.
As she tries to think through a new approach...

DARREN

Mom? I'm gonna sleep over Steve's
tonight? Okay?

MOM

(emphatic; no hesitation)
No.

DARREN

What? Why not?

MOM

Because I said so, Darren.

DARREN

I'm fourteen. I shouldn't even
have to ask stuff like this.

MOM

The answer is no. And I'm not sure
I want you hanging around with

Steve anymore.

DARREN

I've known him since I was five years old!

11.

MOM

People change and I don't like the way Steve's changing.

DARREN

But -- That's not fair!

DAD

Stop arguing with her, Darren.
Furious at his treatment, Darren gets up, stomps out. As Annie wonders if she should ask what's up...

CUT TO:

EXT. DARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

The moonlight glinting off Darren's spider terrarium. Darren, under the covers, gets out of bed. Fully dressed. Going to his door, he listens. Then he crosses to the window. Pulling out the screen, he starts to climb out.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRELIS - SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Darren out his second floor bedroom window, starts to climb down via the trellis. CRACK! A section of the trellis BREAKS under his feet. Darren almost falls, catches hold. He pulls himself over, starts down again.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION STREET - NIGHT

Part of a dilapidated, mostly abandoned downtown. Noirish. Darren and Steve hurry around a corner.

STEVE

I came here after your house.
There was a van there, guy selling
tickets.

(holds up tickets)

Rest is history.

They cross toward the ornate, albeit crumbling facade of the
ZEITERION THEATER. Deserted, except for a few CANDLES
burning on the sidewalk by a door. The wind moans.

DARREN

You know why they closed it, right?
Years ago a kid fell out of the
balcony and died. It's haunted.

12.

Steve catches himself getting spooked. He shoves Darren.

STEVE

Get inside.

CUT TO:

INT. ZEITERION LOBBY - NIGHT

Paint peeling. The walls scribbled on. Most of all - it's
dark. Darren and Steve head toward a glow coming from...

A HALLWAY

They move toward a light at the end. Darren pauses at a
darkened staircase. Headed up. He points it out to Steve...

DARREN

The balcony. Where he fell...

VOICE

May I help you?

They wheel around, react to the sight behind them. MR. TALL.
Gaunt, but oozing an elegant toughness.

STEVE

We're here to see the show.

He takes an ominous step forward, then holds out a hand.

MR. TALL

Ticket.

Steve hands it over. Mr. Tall pockets it, looks to Darren.

MR. TALL

Do you have your ticket? Darren.

Darren starts to hand it over, hesitates. The guy knew his name. Mr. Tall reaches, takes it.

MR. TALL

This way. We're about to begin.

Mr. Tall turns on his heel and strides off. As they follow:

DARREN

(LOW)

He knew my name.

STEVE

Maybe he heard me say it.

13.

Mr. Tall turns a corner, only steps ahead of them. But...

AROUND CORNER

When they turn it, Mr. Tall is gone. Vanished. Ahead, a threadbare velvet CURTAIN. A low murmur on the other side. The boys exchange a last look, then push through into...

THE ZEITERION THEATER

Mouldings removed, cherubs gouged from the walls of a once proud theater. Rows of seats are missing as well. Those that remain are filled. The crowd seems nervous, watching the empty stage expectantly. Yearning for something special. No sign of Mr. Tall. Darren and Steve stand at the top of the aisle. The only kids here. Somewhere off stage a TRUMPET sounds and with it a stage light goes out. Steve nudges Darren, points out two empty seats halfway

down.

As they move for them, a second trumpet sounds and a second stage light goes out.

And so on. By the time Darren and Steve take their seats, the theater has gone black. A final flourish from the

trumpets and all is silent.
Then, a dull green light glows across the stage. Before it
was empty; now there is a CAGE, set on wheels, in the

center.

There's the scraping of chain. A low guttural sound.
A white spot shines down, leaves the front half of the cage
in light, the back half in shadow. A FIGURE moves in there..
The AUDIENCE lean forward, hoping to see when there's a

ROAR!

Several people SCREAM as the figure CRASHES to the front of
the cage. A WOLFMAN for lack of a better term, its body
covered in thick, matted hair. It roars again, shakes the
bars. Its half-canine teeth yellow, its eyes red. A chain
hangs attached to an iron collar around its neck.
Half the audience believe it's real. The other half are
amazed at how real this 'performer' seems. As they buzz, Mr.
Tall steps out on stage. Wearing red leather gloves and hat.

MR. TALL

Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to
the Cirque du Freak. We are an
ancient circus. We have toured for
five hundred years...

14.

Darren and Steve exchange a look at this information.

MR. TALL

.Bringing the remarkable and
grotesque to generations. Our
freaks are not people in masks.
They are not harmless misfits.
What you see tonight is real. Each
performer unique. None harmless.
To prove this, the Wolfman lunges, reaches a claw through

the

bars to swipe just centimeters short of Mr. Tall who's non-
reaction shows he knows exactly where he's standing.
A ripple goes through the crowd as they become aware of
TRUSKA. Startlingly beautiful. Dressed for the Moulin
Rouge. Crossing the stage in a languid catwalk. Several MEN
in the audience begin to cough and shift in their seats.
Even the Wolfman takes notice.

MR. TALL

Beauty and the beast.

upper Truska approaches the cage, makes soothing motions, her

body swaying. The Wolfman lulls to a trance.

Two stage hands - MIDGETS apparently, hidden by blue robes, step out and start to push the cage off stage.

Truska steps toward the audience, moving in the same languorous rhythm. And then: she begins to grow a BEARD. Hairs creeping from above her lip, curling from her chin. Some in the audience recoil.

Darren and Steve trade grins. This is great. Then...

From either wing of the stage come twin contortionists: SIVE & SERSA. They walk on their hands, their legs pulled back with their ankles cinched behind their necks.

As Truska exits, Sive and Sersa meet in the middle. Like Hindu wrestlers they take turns, climbing up and down each other, look like one person with two fronts. They twist like pretzels, getting huge LAUGHS when they pretend to be stuck. As it goes on, RHAMUS TWOBELLIES pads out to watch. The floorboards creak under his feet. He must weigh 600 pounds. After a moment, he turns, walks toward the audience. The light leaves the contortionists and focuses on Rhamus.

15.

RHAMUS

My name is Rhamus Twobellies. And I do have two.

He TRIPS, stumbles toward the edge of the stage. PEOPLE in the front row jump back to keep from being crushed. Rhamus stops short, LAUGHS at them. He was pretending. He's practically doubled-over, resting his hands on his haunches. More blue-robed MIDGETS roll out a CART covered with food

and

lots of other stuff. Rhamus grabs a GLASS BOTTLE of soda. Instead of opening it, he bites off the glass top, chews it and swallows. Soon he's eating food almost as fast as he can grab it. Disgusting, but great fun at the same time. Next, he holds up a couple of nuts and bolts. Then swallows them whole. He swings his belly around. You can hear the sound of metal shifting inside.

The crowd recoils as he starts to regurgitate, spitting out BOLTS, NAILS, BOTTLE CAPS, a JACKKNIFE. They clatter on

stage. Finally, a METAL LINK appears between his teeth. He pinches hold of it and pulls. A CHAIN starts out of his mouth, up from his belly. One foot...two...six feet in all. With a shrug he starts off stage, dragging it behind him. Darren & Steve break into applause. So does the audience. As Rhamus' chain slides out of sight, a SNAKE slides in. An enormous BOA CONSTRICTOR. Impossibly huge. It slithers out to the center of the stage, its tongue flicking in and out. A SPOTLIGHT flicks down from above. The snake stops, raises itself several feet off the ground as it looks up, seemingly transfixed by the light. But in reality... The end of a thick ROPE drops down. And moving (headfirst!) down the rope is a BOY. Very thin, his blonde hair tinged with green. This is EVRA VON. He moves smoothly, twists over backwards to set his feet down on the stage. Evra wears a sort of cloak which he suddenly spins out of. The audience GASPS... Wearing only shorts, Evra's body SPARKLES. He's covered in gold, blue and green scales! He moves a vaguely webbed hand through the air, charming the snake which raises itself higher still. He slowly slides forward till he and the boa are nearly eye-to-eye. Then Evra leans forward and KISSES the snake on the nose.

16.

DARREN & STEVE

DARREN

He's as old as us.

STAGE

Evra starts to make a HISSING sound. In response, the snake begins corkscrewing around him like the stripes on a barber shop pole. Finally, it slithers around his neck, pulls back to look him in the eye. And then...

Evra bends at the knees, lays down and starts to roll. Like he was wrapped in a snake carpet, he disappears stage left. More applause from the audience.

Then the stage goes dark except for a small focused spot at the center. Everyone waits, but nothing happens until... Appearing literally out of nowhere - one instant there's nothing under the spot and the next instant there is --

LARTEN CREPSLEY!

Motionless, looking past the crowd. The only difference from his pictures is he's a bit older and a SCAR runs down his left cheek. It stretches his mouth up on that side.

DARREN & STEVE

Recognize him. Can't believe their eyes. Steve pulls the print-out from his pocket, compares.

DARREN

It's him...

STAGE

Crepsley disappears! The crowd mumble nervously. And just as suddenly he's back! On the edge of the stage, lit by the footlights. This time he holds a draped BIRDCAGE.

CREPSLEY

It's not true. That all tarantulas are poisonous. Though some can kill a man. With one bite.

Crepsley whisks off the covering. In the cage: a TARANTULA the size of a large man's hand. So big you can make out individual eyes. As deadly looking as it is beautiful.

DARREN

Reacts. A spider!

17.

STAGE

Crepsley makes the introduction.

CREPSLEY

Her name? Madam Octa. Pray that she never learns yours.

Two of the blue-robed 'little people' lead a GOAT onto the stage. A ripple of worry runs through the crowd. Crepsley starts over. The goat BLEATS. The little people hold it. Mr. Crepsley flicks open the cage door with his finger. The spider sets its front legs on the bars, pulls itself

through.

A few gasps from the audience. The goat bucks.

Madam Octa bares her fangs, poised to leap on her prey. Several audience members CRY OUT that this should stop.

Crepsley looks out with mock-theatrical surprise.

CREPSLEY

No...? Shall it be life?
Chuckling to himself, he looks to the goat tenders. They release the goat which bee-lines its way off the stage. Crepsley faces the audience.

CREPSLEY

I wonder if you would be as shocked to see the same fate for me?
Madam Octa moves -- climbing the outside of the cage -- taking a cautious step onto the hand holding the cage, then starting up Crepsley's arm. He stands dead still.

DARREN & STEVE

Have a million questions, but right now the performance has their full edge-of-their-seat attention.

STAGE

Madam Octa has nearly reached Crepsley's left shoulder.

CREPSLEY

Though we have been together such a long time, she is no pet. I think she would quite enjoy killing me. Crepsley calmly raises his free hand. It holds a shiny TIN WHISTLE. Madam Octa has reaches his shoulder.

18.

CREPSLEY

For her bite there is no cure. Madam Octa bares her fangs, even longer now. Her malevolence about to be directed at her master. Crepsley carefully puts the whistle to his mouth and starts to play, as simple as it is evocative. Madam Octa hesitates. Then, she moves around his throat, starts to climb his face using his scar as her guide. She gets to the top of his head, stands in his shock of hair. She sways; she's dancing! Then she leaps, lands on the end of the whistle. Crepsley keeps playing as Madam Octa attaches a web, drops down about 18 inches off the end. She starts to swing.

Crepsley takes the whistle from his mouth and twirls it around. Octa does a few 360s and the thread breaks. She sails up high over Crepsley's head. He cranes back to watch as down she comes, legs splayed. She lands flat on his face. The whistle is in his hand. Crepsley looks out at the audience. Looking out between her hairy legs, his eyes are wide with horror. Without warning, the spotlight on him goes out. As the stage is plunged into darkness, we hear Crepsley SCREAM. A horrible, horrible sound. The audience wait, but nothing happens. Some of them rise from their seats, peer into the gloom. It's too dark. The sound of something being DRAGGED. Then nothing. A light comes up stage left as Mr. Tall steps out.

MR. TALL

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.
That is the end of our show.

AUDIENCE MAN

But... What happened to him?!

MR. TALL

Don't you know? What happens to us
all, can happen to any of us.
That said, there's a crack of thunder and an explosion
seemingly at Mr. Tall's feet. He's nowhere to be seen.

19.

The houselights come up. The stage is empty. Some in the audience start to clap. Others are a bit dismayed. Darren and Steve sit there as people start for the exits.

DARREN

Let's get outta here.

STEVE

No, you go. I'm staying.
Steve starts down toward the stage. Darren follows.

DARREN

Wait. What're you doing?
Steve reaches the stage, looks around. The audience is mostly exited; no one from the Cirque is in sight.

As Steve starts up onto the stage, Darren grabs his shoulder.

Steve wheels, shoves Darren who stumbles back into a seat.

STEVE

This is my destiny. Don't ruin it.
Steve looks dangerous as he looms. Darren raises his hands in surrender. Steve eases off, but he's still intense.

STEVE

That car today. It was a sign.
Sending me here. I was told
there'd be a sign.
Too friggin' weird.

DARREN

Told by who? The guy in the chat
room? The internet guy?

STEVE

I'll tell you later. If I can.
Steve scrambles onto the stage and disappears into the back.
Darren stands, whispers into the dark.

DARREN

Steve...
Decision time. Darren climbs up, starts after his friend.

CUT TO:

20.

INT. ZEITERION THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Darren moves back into the gloom. Deserted, the junk casts sinister shadows. Then, a sound at his feet. Darren stops short. Sees that he's almost walked into an open stage DOOR IN THE FLOOR. The sound is someone moving below.

DARREN

Steve...?
No answer. Darren decides, starts down steep, rickety steps.

CUT TO:

STEVE - UNDERSTAGE STORAGE AREA

He moves past a dilapidated stage elevator. Stumbles. As he heads further into the dark.

DARREN

Coming down the creaky stairs. Spooky.

DARREN

Steve...

CUT TO:

STEVE

Turning a corner, is startled by what turns out to be a costume mannequin. But beyond: a LONG BOX set on two sawhorses. Coffin-sized. Empty, its lid propped up by it. The dust is tracked with footsteps. A mini-FRIDGE hums in a corner. Steve steps over, sees an EXTENSION CORD which runs up the wall, disappears into a hole punched in the ceiling.

DARREN

his Stops short as a LIGHT suddenly cuts through the gloom to left. Darren steps over low behind a CREDENZA. He sees...

STEVE

He's opened the door to the fridge. The little bulb inside pushes through the gloom, lighting the area up.

DARREN

Reacts as MADAM OCTA tries to jump on his face! The bars of her CAGE stop her. It rests on the credenza he crouches behind. The whistle is there too. Darren looks over as...

21.

STEVE

be Reaches in the fridge, takes out a glass jar that looks to filled with BLOOD. Steve raises it, swirls it around inside.

CREPSLEY'S VOICE

Are you looking for me?

Steve whirls -- drops the bottle -- SMASH!
Standing behind him - dead still - CREPSLEY.

DARREN

Rooted to the spot. Watching...

STEVE & CREPSLEY

Crespley sniffs the air - the spilled blood to be exact.

STEVE

I -- I know who you are.

CREPSLEY

Tell me, boy. Who am I?

STEVE

You're a vampire.

CREPSLEY

Too broad a definition. Do you
introduce yourself as a human? Who
I am is Larten Crepsley.

DARREN

Moving slightly to get a clearer view.

STEVE & CREPSLEY

Crespley suddenly DISAPPEARS, REAPPEARS much closer. Steve
jumps, twists around. Unnerved.

CREPSLEY

Who sent you and what do they want?

STEVE

Nothing. No one.
Crespley takes a moment to decide if he believes him.

CREPSLEY

Then what do you want?

22.

STEVE

I want to join you.

CREPSLEY

Join me? I don't understand.

STEVE

I want you to make me a vampire.
Not what Crepsley (or Darren) expected. Steve stands there trying to look resolved. Crepsley is surprised, intrigued.

CREPSLEY

Is it because you want to live forever? Because we don't.

STEVE

I don't care about living forever.
But you do seem to live a long time.

CREPSLEY

A long time alone. Do you want to live alone?

STEVE

I already do.

CREPSLEY

Are you an orphan?

STEVE

My father's gone; my mother doesn't care about me.

CREPSLEY

Nor mine. You're friendless also?

STEVE

I have a friend, but he doesn't understand. He's got too much to know what it's like to be alone. As Darren reacts to this...

STEVE

When you're alone you feel weak. Useless. But I know there must be something strong about it, too. I want to feel the power of being alone. I want to be a vampire.

23.

CREPSLEY

The power of being alone will never be greater than the weakness of it.

STEVE

I don't care.

Crepsley's actually impressed, but after a moment he waves a dismissive hand.

CREPSLEY

It makes no matter. We do not blood children. I'm sorry.

Steve pulls a JACKKNIFE from his pocket, flips open the 2-inch blade. Crepsley laughs out loud.

CREPSLEY

Do you intend to use that on me?

And we feel it more than see it, but Steve cuts into his own palm. He holds it up, moist and red in Crepsley's face.

STEVE

Do it. Make me a vampire.

CREPSLEY

Do not tempt me.

DARREN

Can't believe what he's watching. He sees Crepsley suddenly get 'scent' of something. Something to do with Steve's blood. Not quite a clear view as Crepsley grabs Steve's wrist, dabs a finger into his palm and then tastes it.

CREPSLEY

Crepsley shoves Steve down to the ground and immediately begins spitting onto the floor. Like it was poison.

STEVE

What's wrong?

CREPSLEY

You have bad blood.

STEVE

What do you mean?

24.

CREPSLEY

I can taste the menace in your
blood. You can never be a vampire.
You're evil.
Steve scrambles to his feet.

STEVE

That's a lie. You take that back!
Crepsey draws himself full, his voice deadly.

CREPSLEY

Go home.
Suddenly cowed, Steve just stands there blinking.

CREPSLEY

GO!

Steve runs, disappears into the gloom. After a moment, we
can hear him scurrying up the stairs. Then he's gone.

DARREN

holds
Frozen to his spot, watches as Crepsley, seemingly ill,
his head and spits again onto the floor. Then he steps over
and kicks the fridge door closed.
And in the blink of an eye, he's gone. Disappeared.
Darren is alone. He starts out, then stops. Looks back.
That beautiful spider. And Darren takes Madam Octa's cage
and the whistle and makes a run for it. Just like that.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - DARREN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

3 AM. Dead quiet. Darren hurries home, cage in hand.
Looking over his shoulder. So far so good. He nearly trips
over an untied shoelace. He sets down the cage, to tie it.
Madam Octa lunges across her cage at a WORM on the sidewalk.

DARREN

Oh. You want that?
Darren picks up the worm, lowers it between the bars. A beat
and then Madam Octa snatches it away from him. Dinner.

25.

DARREN

See? I'm your friend... You're so beautiful I stopped thinking.
The wind rustles. Darren grabs the cage, continues.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

The house dark. Holding the cage with one hand, Darren starts climbing the side of the house using the other. He avoids the broken section, but as he reaches the window: His Dad is standing there looking out. Busted.

DAD

Get inside.
From his angle, Darren's Dad can't see the cage in his son's hand. Darren hooks it over the end piece of part of the trellis and climbs in. Leaving the cage hanging behind.

CUT TO:

INT. DARREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darren stands across from his Dad.

DAD

A freak show? Are you kidding me?

DARREN

It was down at the old Zeiterion Theater. Look, dad, I'm sorry.
It's just, I couldn't resist. I --

DAD

You told me the other day you were broke. You were looking for a job to do around the house this weekend.

DARREN

Yeah? So?

DAD

Where'd you get money for the show?

DARREN

Steve had money.
Darren's Dad's suspicion is confirmed.

26.

DAD

Steve... We weren't going to tell you, but we think Steve stole money from your Mom's purse yesterday.

DARREN

He wouldn't do that.

DAD

Mom's pretty sure about it.

DARREN

Man, what is this? You don't want me hanging around with him. Now you say you think he stole money? Do you know for sure?

DAD

No.

DARREN

Steve's had some bad times lately. I'm trying to be a good friend.

DAD

Being a good friend and sneaking out are two different things.

DARREN

I have to sneak out! You treat me like a kid!
A moment as Darren's raised voice rings out of the room.

DAD

Then act like an adult if that's
how you want to be treated. This
world is crossed by fences --
Darren interrupts. He's heard it a million times.

DARKEN

I know, I know. And you gotta
decide which side you stand on.
And you can't sit on it either.
His Dad doesn't enjoy hearing his words thrown back at him.
He starts for the door, looks back before exiting.

DAD

A freak show. What do they do, put
people in cages for everyone to
laugh at?

27.

Darren feels bad, like a kid. He looks down at the floor.

DARREN

It wasn't like that.
A beat. Darren's Dad goes, closing the door. Darren sighs.
He goes to the window, pulls up the cage. He scans a look
outside. Except for his Dad, the coast is clear.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOSET - DARREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darren sets the cage on a shelf, shuts the door. Black.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SHAN HOUSE - MORNING

Darren's Mom making omelettes. Darren's DAD helping, dicing
up some ham. Annie sits at the table awaiting the results.

ANNIE

Is he in a lot of trouble?

DAD

Nothing a few years in prison won't
take care of.

ANNIE

I don't see what the big deal is...

DAD

(TO MOM)

Did you talk to Steve's mom yet?

MOM

Get this. She said she couldn't
comment because she didn't make it
home last night herself.

ANNIE

Where was she?

MOM

Go tell Darren it's breakfast.

CUT TO:

MADAM OCTA - VIDEO VIEW

Seen through the bars of her cage. FREEZE FRAME.

28.

DARREN'S ROOM

Darren's just snapped her photo with his DIGITAL CAMERA.
As the door bursts open and Annie enters... Darren scrambles
to block the cage from view.

DARREN

Annie, you gotta learn to knock.

ANNIE

Mom said to come eat. What's that?
As Annie tries to look, Darren stays in front of her.

DARREN

Out.

Annie sighs, heads out. Darren puts the cage in the closet.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SHAN HOUSE - DAY

Darren arrives, sits as everyone pretends not to notice. His mom slides his omelette off the pan into his plate. Annie watches everyone's every move. Darren eats a bite.

DARREN

Mom, this is the best omelette I ever had.

His Dad can't help but smile. Good move. Mom is pleased, but knows she's being manipulated. As Annie stifles a laugh, Darren shoots her a look.

A KNOCK at the kitchen door. Annie gets up, opens the door to reveal: Steve. From his angle he can only see Annie.

STEVE

Hey, midget, where's the idiot?

Annie motions Steve in. He stops short when he sees everyone else. He recovers, does his best Eddie Haskell...

STEVE

Hi, Mr. Shan, Mrs. Shan. It's nice to see ya.

As Steve gets several less than welcoming looks...

CUT TO:

29.

INT. DARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Darren and Steve enter his bedroom.

STEVE

What was that? Everyone acting like they don't know me. Did I walk in on something?

Darren closes the door. Gets to the point.

DARREN

What happened last night?

STEVE

Nothing. I hung out in the theater for awhile, but no one was around. The lie hangs in the air a moment.

STEVE

Sorry about the way I acted. I'm sorry I pushed you.

DARREN

Don't worry. There's, you know, no bad blood or anything like that.

STEVE

What?

DARREN

I said don't worry.

STEVE

You said bad blood. I never heard you say something like that before.

DARREN

What are you, the word police? Steve gives him a look. A weird tension in the air. Darren glances at the bandage on Steve's palm, changes the topic.

DARREN

Wanna see that new game I got?

STEVE

Sure... Darren steps over, starts his computer up. While waiting, Steve sees the digital camera on the dresser, picks it up.

30.

STEVE

I gotta get one of these. Steve switches it on. Something occurs to Darren too late...

DARREN

Let me see that --
On the screen: the PHOTO OF MADAM OCTA. Steve twists around
to keep the camera out of Darren's reach.

STEVE

It's Madam Octa.

DARREN

I took it at the show.

STEVE

Liar. Look at the background.
This got taken right on your desk.
Darren's caught. As they just stare at each other.

CUT TO:

MADAM OCTA

In her cage, on the desk. Darren and Steve looking her over.

STEVE

How'd you do it?

DARREN

They were loading a van outside.
I, I just took her.

STEVE

Just like that...
(after a look)
You stole from a vampire you know?

DARREN

Just because he had a coffin
doesn't mean he's really a...
Darren trails off. Steve realizes Darren saw the coffin.

STEVE

You were there, weren't you?

(NO ANSWER)

You heard what he said to me? That
I was evil?

31.

DARREN

I didn't believe it.
Steve studies Darren, hopes that's true.

DARREN

I heard what you said to him, too.
That you wanted to be a vampire.
Steve doesn't want to talk about it. He looks at Madam Octa.

STEVE

How do you think he made her do
what he wanted?
Darren opens his desk drawer, pulls out the flute.

DARREN

I wish I knew how to play it.

STEVE

I think that was just for show. I
think he used something else. Some
kind of mind control.

DARREN

You mean telepathy?

STEVE

I bet anyone with a brain could do
it. Which leaves you out.
Steve smiles, gives Darren a little punch in the arm. The
tension is loosening. They react to a KNOCK on the door.

ANNIE'S VOICE

Can I come in?
Darren goes to the door. Opens it a few inches.

DARREN

I swear to God, Annie...

ANNIE

What? I knocked.
As they talk, Steve opens the cage door. Madam Octa sets her
arms on the edge, pulls herself out.

LEAPS --

Lands on Steve's shoulder. Her fangs, wet with poison, glint
just before she sinks them into Steve's throat. She BITES!

32.

Steve surges upward, his shout dying in his throat. He stiffens, eyes snapped wide, and then crumples to the floor. Darren and Annie react as --
Madam Octa scurries off, disappears behind the curtain.

DARREN

(TO ANNIE)

Don't move.

Annie freezes. Darren grabs a BASEBALL BAT which leans in the corner. He reaches out, pokes at the curtain with it. Madam Octa drops down onto the window sill -- WHAM! Wood cracks as Darren brings down the bat, but Madam Octa is too quick. She disappears, leaping out the open window! Darren pulls it shut. He rushes back to Steve, turns him over. Steve's skin is already a deathly pale.

DARREN

Steve...

Annie reaches out, takes Steve's hand.

ANNIE

Darren, he's freezing.

DARREN

Get dad. Go.

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Hospital doors BANG OPEN as a gurney bearing Steve is rushed through. Darren and his Dad follow with a DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

What kind of spider was it?

DARREN

I think some kind of a tarantula.

DOCTOR

Where is it?

DARREN

It got away.

Darren's Dad holds up the camera.

33.

DAD

We have a picture of it.
The doctor takes it as a NURSE meets the gurney.

DOCTOR

Anaphylactic shock. Get Doctor
Lund. And we need to download a
photo to poison control.
This is as far as Darren goes. Steve is wheeled in,
surrounded. Syringes are drawn, handed in. All we can see
of Steve is one skinny arm hanging out.
PUSH IN ON DARREN. Sick for Steve. Scared. Unaware that
his world has only just started to crash down around him.

CUT TO:

DR. LUND - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Tough, no nonsense. Marching along, carrying a print-out,
coming to a stop where Darren sits on a plastic chair. He
sticks the print-out into his face. The PHOTO of Madam Octa.

DR. LUND

How did you make this and why would
you make this?
Darren's Mom and Dad start over from down the corridor.

DR. LUND

Poison control couldn't ID it. In
fact, the department of Entomology
at Harvard couldn't find it in
their data base. So either it's a
new species or it's a fake photo.

DAD

If my son said he took that photo,
then that's the truth.
Dr. Lund just stares at Darren. Then:

WOMAN'S VOICE

What have you done to him?!
STEVE'S MOM approaches, her eyes on Darren. Disheveled,

cheap looking, she hasn't quite started her hangover yet. She lunges past Darren's dad, grabs Darren by the shoulder.

STEVE'S MOM

Did you hurt Stevie?! Did you?!

34.

She shakes Darren hard. Darren's Dad gets between them. She breaks down, sobbing. Darren's mom tries to soothe her as she moans about what a bad mother she is.

DR. LUND

Your friend's going to die unless we find out what's in him.

On Darren. He looks down to where light spills out from Steve's room. His friend is going to die in there.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Darren as he lays in bed, staring at the ceiling. His clock switches to 2:58 AM. Deciding, Darren gets out of bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Dressed, Darren climbs out the window, starts down.

CUT TO:

EXT. ZEITERION THEATER - NIGHT

Dead lonely as Darren approaches, steps up to the glass door.

As he leans in to look into the lobby, the door gives a little. It's unlocked. Darren pushes it open with a finger.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERSTAGE STORAGE AREA - ZEITERION - NIGHT

Darren's by the credenza where he hid. The coffin is gone.

DARREN

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA - NIGHT

MOVE WITH DARREN who comes up from below and crosses. Stay with him as he parts the curtains and comes out on the...

ZEITERION STAGE

Where he stops short, sees in the center of the stage -- Crepsley's COFFIN. A beat and Darren steps up. He grips the lid, starts sliding it back. He looks inside to see --

35.

Madam Octa perched on the side, staring back at him! Darren stumbles back. The coffin lid SLAMS to the stage as Darren loses his footing, lands on his butt. And then -- APPLAUSE. One pair of hands create a hollow echo. Crepsley sits alone in the middle of the theater. Clapping. And then he's gone! Only to reappear over Darren, offering a hand up. Darren scrambles to his feet. A beat.

CREPSLEY

What have you come for this time?
Darren pulls out a CRUCIFIX, holds it in Crepsley's face. The vampire takes it, looks it over. It has no effect.

DARREN

Crosses don't hurt you?

CREPSLEY

Why should they?

DARREN

Because... you're evil.

CREPSLEY

Am I? Are vampire bats evil when they drink the blood of cows?

DARREN

That's different. Bats are animals.

CREPSLEY

So am I. So are you. Our
appetites don't make us evil.
(as Darren ponders...)
Why are you here?

DARREN

Your spider bit my friend Steve.
Crepsey shrugs, tosses Darren back his crucifix.

DARREN

He's dying.

CREPSLEY

Yes, well, boys who play with
things they do not understand can
hardly complain if --

36.

DARREN

You have to help him!

CREPSLEY

The antidote to her poison is rare.
Expensive. Why should someone as
evil as I am waste it on Steve?

DARREN

I'll pay you back. If it takes 50
years. Whatever it costs.

CREPSLEY

Money doesn't interest me.

DARREN

There's something you want. That's
why you're here waiting for me.
Right?
Crepsey's surprised and pleased by Darren's intuitiveness.

CREPSLEY

The night Steve came below to speak to me, you were there. Did you hear what we talked about?

DARREN

He wanted to... become like you.

CREPSLEY

You don't just 'become' a vampire. The change is too extreme. And if the shock didn't kill you, your inexperience would. So you become one in stages. A half-vampire at first. With greater strength than a human, but still able to go out in sunlight. You learn from a full vampire. Do you understand?

DARREN

I think so...

CREPSLEY

But your friend has bad blood. He's no good. There's no telling what he'll become as he matures.

DARREN

I don't believe that someone can have bad blood.

37.

CREPSLEY

And yesterday you didn't believe in vampires. Regardless, I've left the Cirque. Left my protection. I need someone to protect me while I sleep. I need an apprentice.

DARREN

(SUDDENLY REALIZES)

Me?

Crepsley nods.

DARREN

You're crazy. There's no way.

CREPSLEY

Then your friend will die.
The words hang in the air. Crepsley smiles.

CREPSLEY

You hardly have a choice. It's
your destiny.

DARREN

Destiny? That doesn't make sense.

CREPSLEY

Try this then. You're reckless
enough to steal, responsible enough
to come back for a friend. That's
enough for me.

DARREN

Not for me.

CREPSLEY

Yes, well, destiny can't be
explained. It must be lived. Now,
you're wasting my time.

DARREN

There's gotta be another way.

CREPSLEY

There isn't.

DARREN

Please... He's my friend.

38.

CREPSLEY

And he slips away while we argue.
Life or death? Yes or no?

DARREN

You'd never be able to trust me.
If I got a chance for payback I'd
take it.

CREPSLEY

Yes or no?
Thoughts rush, then stop. Darren finally just nods.
Crepsey raises his right hand. The nails are not especially
long, but they look thick and sharp.
Crepsey takes Darren's hand, jabs at his forefinger, draws
blood. He dabs off a drop, smells it, then tastes it.

CREPSLEY

You have good blood.
Crepsey lifts his own left hand. He presses the nails of
his right into the fleshy tips of his left hand fingers.
Then he uses the left nails to mark the right fingers in the
same way. Blood drips down all ten fingers.

CREPSLEY

Lift your hands.
Darren does as he's told. Crepsley digs all ten nails into
all ten of Darren's fingertips. Darren jerks back in pain.

CREPSLEY

Get used to pain. More lies ahead.
He motions to his hands. Darren raises them, fingers spread.
Crepsey presses his fingertips to Darren's. Blood brothers.
As their eyes lock, Darren frowns at an alien sensation.

CREPSLEY

The blood flows into your left arm
and out of your right. Do you feel
it? Getting near your heart?
Darren nods, shivers.

CREPSLEY

Almost there.
A force arcs through Darren's body. He screams, falls down.

39.

Crepsey turns away, starts to lick the blood from his
fingertips. Tries to block out Darren's soft whimpering.

Tries to block out any sympathy he feels.

CREPSLEY

The world will start to slow down.
You'll become a witness of time.
(snaps out of it)
Your friend's time is running out.
He pulls Darren to his feet.

CUT TO:

EXT. ZEITERION THEATER - NIGHT

They step out into the moonlight. Darren a little wobbly.

CREPSLEY

Take my arm. Don't let go.
Darren takes hold. Crepsley starts to move. Only it seems
more like he's still and the ground is moving under his
feet.

Darren looks about as the building begin to streak past, the
road a blurred ribbon. The night has a weird chromatic look.
The world moving faster, Crepsley and Darren slipping past.
A moment later and they're in the...

HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

Crepsley pulls loose Darren's hand. They're still bleeding.

CREPSLEY

Lick your fingers. Vampire spit
will stop wounds from bleeding.
Darren looks at his fingers, then around the lot.

DARREN

How'd we get here?

CREPSLEY

It's called flitting. Which room
is your friend in?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - STEVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tubes run in and out of Steve. His breathing is labored.

40.

Crepsley leans over him, rolls up one of Steve's eyelids. Darren watches as Crepsley looks into Steve's eye.

CREPSLEY

We're in time. He still has a few minutes left.

Crepsley takes a small AMBER VIAL from his pocket. He breaks a wax seal then pinches out a small blackened cork.

He pulls the drip line out of the IV CATHETER and empties a drop of the vial's dark, viscous contents inside. It swirls murkily, coloring the liquid on its way into Steve's arm. A beat and then Steve seems to convulse, his arms and legs twitching. Is he dying?

DARREN

What's happening?

CREPSLEY

He was near death. The journey back is not pleasant. What do you know about him, this boy with bad blood?

DARREN

He's my friend.

CREPSLEY

Hmm... Who's his father?

DARREN

Never met him. I don't think Steve ever did either. Why do you want to know?

And then Steve comes around. He opens his eyes, focuses on Darren for a moment. He looks puzzled.

STEVE

Darren?

And then he drifts off, asleep. His breathing growing deeper, steadier. Darren realizing he's going to be okay.

CREPSLEY

Will you come with me now or do you have things to set in order first?

That's when it really hits home. He's agreed to leave everything and go off with a vampire. Without really thinking, Darren starts backing toward the door, his eyes on Crepsley.

41.

CREPSLEY

I see...
Darren's almost to the door. Crepsley stays where he is.

CREPSLEY

Run if you want. It won't help.
You're a creature of the night now,
Darren Shan.
Darren turns and bolts leaving Crepsley alone. Chuckling,
the vampire tucks Steve's covers up under his chin.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL DOORS - NIGHT

BURSTING OPEN as Darren charges out. Running for his life.

CUT TO:

INT. DARREN'S ROOM - MORNING

Darren asleep in his bed. The door opens and his mom enters.

MOM

Darren... Wake up, honey.
Darren wakes with a start as she gives him a little shake.
As he looks about, wonders what reality he's in.

MOM

I just got off the phone. Great
news. Steve's going to be okay.

DARREN

What?

MOM

The hospital says it's a miracle.
Was it a dream? Darren looks down at his hands. On the tip
of each finger and two thumbs are small round WHITE SCARS.
Darren instinctively hugs his mom. She thinks he's
overjoyed, can't see his look of terror. She hugs him back.

MOM

Yeah, it's great news. I know how you feel.

CUT TO:

42.

EXT. THE SHAN HOUSE - DAY

The door opens and Darren steps out. He takes a long look up and down the street. Nervous. Then he see the sun up in the sky. Relaxes a little. Right... Vampires... Sun. He takes a step down the stairs when... From out of the bushes... SOMEONE LEAPS!

ANNIE

Boo!
Darren nearly jumps out of his skin. Annie laughs.

ANNIE

Got you! I finally got you! -
Darren turns on her, looks like he could kill her.

DARREN

Don't ever do that again.
Annie's smile drops away. As Darren continues on...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - SCHOOL - DAY

Darren walking along, feeling isolated as he moves past the other students. Everything seems weird, off. A couple of KIDS RUSH past him going into a classroom. Then a COUPLE more coming the other way.

KID

Hey, Shan, you gotta see this.
They duck into the classroom. Darren follows.

SCIENCE LAB

TWENTY or so KIDS all pressed around the Boa Constrictor tank. Steve holds court.

STEVE

.Doctor said it was a miracle.
They say I'm unique --
Steve spots Darren as he steps up in the back.

STEVE

Hey, Darren. I've been looking for
you. We got a lot to talk about.

43.

DARREN

Yeah?

STEVE

But first...
Steve holds out a fist. A MOUSE pokes its head out through
an opening in the hand. Its whiskers twitch. As Darren
looks from the mouse to the snake...
Steve addresses the kids does his best 'Mr. Tall'. He tries
to be entertaining, but he comes off creepy.

STEVE

Welcome to Cirque du Steve. What
happens to us all can happen to any
of us. If you watch, it's by your
own free will. Say farewell...

HEFTS MOUSE

.to Crepsley the mouse.
Darren reacts to the name. Steve lowers his hand into the
terrarium. Some kids already look away, others are intent.

DARREN

STOP --

Steve hesitates. Darren pushes to the front.

DARREN

It's cruel.

STEVE

It's nature. Anyhow don't watch.

(TO KIDS)

And don't blink; you might miss it.
Steve sets the mouse in the terrarium.
The MOUSE takes a few tentative steps. Moves toward a corner
away from the... SNAKE who's suddenly alert. It raises its
head, flicks its tongue. Coils back on itself.
ZAP! The snake STRIKES...
And Darren darts down his hand! CATCHES the snake just below
its head, out of mid-air, out of mid-strike. Impossible!
The snake twists in Darren's hand. The students are blown
away. Steve's eyes narrow, his wheels are turning.
The BELL RINGS. Moment over. Kids hurry out to class.

44.

Darren scoops up the mouse, drops the snake back in. As he
starts out, Steve cuts him off.

STEVE

What happened to the spider?

DARREN

I killed it.
Steve hesitates, processes, looks Darren over.

STEVE

I had a dream. You and Crepsley
were in my hospital room...

DARREN

Tell me about it later.
Darren starts away. Steve grabs him hard, spins him around.

STEVE

I'll tell you now.
Darren reacts instinctively, grabs Steve with his free hand
and SLAMS him against the wall. Steve's nearly off the
ground, only his left toe touching.

DARREN

I said later.
Darren lets go, heads off. Steve watches, wonders.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - DARREN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Darren walks home, hands in pockets. Annie comes up behind.

ANNIE

Darren! Wait up!
He looks over his shoulder, keep going.

ANNIE

Can I walk home with you?
He softens, slows down. After a few silent steps.

DARREN

Got you something.
Darren pulls the MOUSE from his pocket. Annie loves it, cups it in her hand.

45.

ANNIE

He's adorable.

ANNIE & DARREN - A CREATURE'S POV

Coming in low and fast.

STREET

Annie SCREAMS as a GERMAN SHEPHERD charges, stops just short of them. GROWLING like it was rabid. Like it hates Darren. Darren steps between it and Annie. Darren's pupils dilate oddly; he curls his lip to show his own teeth. The dog starts to back off..

ANNIE

Hey. That's King.

DARREN

No it's not. King's my buddy.

ANNIE

That's King, Darren. It is.
Darren realizes it is King. As Darren realizes something's wrong with Darren.. Another growl. From down the street. Darren looks back as a black 1966 LINCOLN prowls through the intersection. The one seen at school. It slows, windows

blacked out. As it continues, disappears from view...

DARREN

Come on.

As Darren hurries Annie along down the street...

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Darren at the kitchen table doing his math homework. His Mom makes dinner, chopping vegetables at the sink.

MOM

How was school today?

DARREN

The usual. Sometimes it was boring, sometimes really boring. Darren's mom laughs. Then...

46.

MOM

Ouch!

She drops the knife on the cutting board. A thick drop of BLOOD runs down her finger.

Darren flinches at the sight and in that moment we PUNCH

INTO

his eyes. The PUPILS swirl red; the IRISES flatten and narrow. A dark, ravenous look.

MOM - DARREN'S POV

Holding up her finger. Her skin tone receding back into gray, the blood pulsing with red vibrancy. Alive. A target.

DARREN

Standing at the blood's seeming siren call. But as he suddenly moves forward, she turns away. Darren stops as she wraps her finger in a paper towel. She looks back at him: misunderstands his hunger for concern.

MOM

It's okay, honey. I just need a

band-aid.

Darren looks at his mom's neck. His eyes zero in on a little blue VEIN PULSING away. She leaves the room to get a band-aid. As Darren's horror sinks in...

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Darren looks at his reflection in the MIRROR. Looking for reassurance. He curls his lip, checks his teeth. They look normal. He reaches out. Trying to reach himself. His hand comes to a stop against the glass. His nails CLICK hard against the surface. He scrapes the nail of his forefinger along the glass. It leaves a deep scratch. Darren starts to freak a little. His breath getting ragged. He tries to get a hold of himself, looks back in the mirror.

DARREN

You're different...

CUT TO:

47.

INT. ZEITERION THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Darren walks down an aisle, climbs up onto the empty stage. Dark, but Darren moves calmly, like it was noon.

DARREN

Hello? Hey!

Crepsley appears. Darren turns, sees him. A beat. Crepsley raises his hands to the gloom around them.

CREPSLEY

The darkness isn't so scary anymore, is it?

DARREN

I'm starting to think it's me that's scary.
Crepsley waits to hear more.

DARREN

It's only gonna get worse, isn't it? There's no way back, is there? No magic potion to make me human again?

Crepsley shakes his head. Darren nods that he understands.

DARREN

We made a deal. I won't run away again.

CREPSLEY

It's neither here nor there, but, I do feel sorry for you. Darren waves it off, doesn't want to hear it.

CREPSLEY

Are you ready then? The night is young. We can make many miles.

DARREN

I can't just -- My family, I can't let them think I just left them. Or that something happened to me. My mother would... She couldn't... As Darren trails off, Crepsley really does look sympathetic.

CREPSLEY

There's only one thing for it.

48.

DARREN

What?

CREPSLEY

We'll have to kill you.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIVING ROOM - SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Darren's parents watching CNN. Darren comes in.

DARREN

I'm going to bed.

They say 'good night' to him. Impulsively, Darren kisses his dad on the cheek, then does the same to his mom.

DARREN

I love you both. I don't say it that much, but I do.

Darren's Mom is caught off guard, but happy to hear it.

MOM

We love you, too. Don't we, Tommy?

DAD

Of course we do.

Darren looks at them a beat, then smiles, satisfied.

DARREN

Good night.

They watch him go, then exchange looks.

DAD

(SHRUGS)

Kids. Who knows how they think?

CUT TO:

INT. ANNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Annie asleep already. Darren enters, pulls his sister's blanket up, tucks it under her chin. He whispers:

DARREN

Goodbye, knucklehead. If I can ever help you, I will.

CUT TO:

49.

INT. DARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Darren enters to find Crepsley sitting at his desk. He holds

a small dark bottle between his fingers (different than the one he gave to Steve). As Crepsley's about to speak...

DARREN

Shut up.
Off Crepsley's reaction...

DARREN

This is my home and I'm never gonna see it again, so don't rush me. Crepsley makes a motion to zip his lips. All the same, he stands, unscrews the bottle as Darren takes a last look around. He takes a PHOTO of his family off the dresser.

DARREN

Hold onto this for me, okay?
Crepsley takes the photo, offers Darren the bottle in return.

Darren sniffs, recoils at the foul smell.

DARREN

You're sure it will work?
Crepsley opens the window.

CREPSLEY

Your heart will slow down so drastically they won't find a pulse. With the fall from the window, they'll think you're dead.

DARREN

What if I break bones?

CREPSLEY

Even better. They'll mend in a few days. Vampires don't stay broken for long and it takes a very long fall to kill one.

DARREN

And the funeral home? Won't they embalm me or something?

CREPSLEY

Don't worry. I have ways of making my thoughts become the thoughts of others. They'll leave you alone.

50.

Crepsley gestures to the window. Knowing the plan, Darren climbs out, his foot resting on the trellis. He looks to the ground, back to Crepsley as an odd thought hits him.

DARREN

My dad's allergic to grass. It's my job to cut the lawn.

CREPSLEY

You have a new job now. Drink. Darren steels himself, gulps it down, hands the bottle back.

DARREN

So this is destiny, huh? Tastes like crap. Darren body seizes up. He lets go, but Crepsley grabs him.

CREPSLEY

Your breathing is slowing, your heart as well. Do you feel it? Darren can't answer. He blinks his eyes 'yes' instead.

CREPSLEY

You may be aware of what's going on around you. Remember, the grief that you hear will be a release for those who express it. Darren's eyes drift shut. Crepsley lets him go.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Darren FALLS, crashes through the trellis and thumps into the lawn. Crepsley looks down from the window, then disappears. CLOSE ON Darren lying face down in the grass. CRICKETS chirp. Beyond, a NEIGHBOR walks his DOG. The dog suddenly turns in the direction of Darren, pulls on its leash.

NEIGHBOR

No, no, come on -- The Neighbor stops short as he sees the body.

NEIGHBOR

Hey -- Hey, kid -- He rolls Darren over, realizes something is very wrong.

51.

We stay on Darren, the dog sniffing at him as the neighbor disappears toward the front door. We hear his fist pound. A moment later, Darren's father is there. He looks at Darren, up to the open window, realizes he fell. An instant later, he's on his knees, cradling his son.

DAD

Darren? Darren!
A moment later his Mom...

MOM

Darren! Oh my God!
We're still on Darren's face, his eye open a slit.

DARREN'S POV

His parents hovering over him in despair. The STARS TWINKLE. The neighbor leans in.

NEIGHBOR

Is he dead?

CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Darren's body on a stainless steel table. The MEDICAL EXAMINER shakes his head sadly, looks to his ASSISTANT.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Cause of death is trauma from the impact of the fall. Poor kid.

ASSISTANT

Are we doing an autopsy?

A NEW ANGLE

Reveals Crepsley watching from around a darkened corner.

CREPSLEY

(WHISPERS)

Not on a child.

Immediately...

MEDICAL EXAMINER

I'm not going to cut open a kid.
Not when I don't have to.

CUT TO:

52.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - EARLY EVENING

Darren in his coffin, wearing a suit. Aware as...
Friends and family passing by. The sounds of people crying.
TWO CUTE GIRLS from school lean in.

GIRL ONE

He's still cute.

GIRL TWO

I always had a crush on him.
The Goalie from school soccer is next. He holds a little
SOCCER BALL in his hand. Tucks it into the coffin.

GOALIE

For the next life, Shan. Top right
corner every time.
Annie steps up, gently strokes her brother's cheek. Then
suddenly overwhelmed, she buries her face in their Dad's
chest. He leans in tenderly over his son. Choked up:

DAD

I love you, Darren. You said it
the other night; I didn't say it
back.

CUT TO:

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

PEOPLE leave. Visiting hours are over.

CUT TO:

DARREN IN HIS COFFIN

A hand reaches down, a thumb opens his eyelid.

DARREN'S POV

Of the ceiling for a moment, then a blinding light flashing back and forth. Then glimpses of Steve's face!

VISITING ROOM

Steve holds Darren's eye open, shines a PENLIGHT into it. The pupil doesn't dilate. Footsteps approach. Steve switches it off, pockets it as the FUNERAL DIRECTOR enters.

53.

DIRECTOR

I'm sorry. I know it's difficult, but visiting hours are over. Steve nods sadly, looks to Darren. He pats one of Darren's hands which are folded across his chest. In reality Steve checks Darren's fingertips. A WHITE SCAR at the end of each one. Steve's crazy idea may be confirmed.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Darren's coffin is lowered into the ground.

MINISTER

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to come... Darren's Dad tosses a handful of earth down onto the coffin.

CUT TO:

DARREN INSIDE THE CLOSED COFFIN

The lid an inch from his face. His eyelid twitching as we hear shovelfuls of dirt hit the lid. The sound growing duller at each turn. Then, as Darren's eye flickers open...

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Moonless. The sound of digging continues. Only now, dirt is coming out of the hole rather than going in. Crepsley is digging the coffin back up. Effortlessly. Finally, he spreads his feet apart, pulls open the lid. Darren sputters as some of the dirt spills onto his face. Crepsley reaches down, pulls him up and out of the grave. Darren sits on the ground, coughing then moaning.

CREPSLEY

On your feet.

DARREN

My legs are asleep.

54.

Crepsley pulls him up anyhow. Darren stumbles a few steps, nearly falls before finding his balance.

CREPSLEY

Walk it off. I'll fill this back in. Go. Breathe some air.

Darren
Crepsley closes the coffin, begins to fill the hole as
ambles off. Not exactly the start of his best day.

MOVE WITH DARREN

Passing among the graves, stretching his arms, twisting. Really beat up. He looks about, the names and dates on the headstones popping into focus even from far away. Night vision. Suddenly he becomes aware of something: Steve. On the other side of a mausoleum. Ten feet away.

DARREN

What are you doing here?

STEVE

(smiles; closing in)

Vampire hunting.

Steve rushes the last step, a jagged WOODEN STAKE held high over his head. He knocks Darren back on the ground.

Pouncing on top, he brings down the stake.

Darren catches hold of Steve's wrist. Stops the point of the stake just over his heart. Steve puts his weight into it. A

desperate moment of struggle, but Darren's strength is resurgent. He throws Steve off. Steve rolls to his feet, comes at him again. Darren catches his wrist with one hand, his throat with the other. He slams him up against the mausoleum, holds him there.

DARREN

What do you have against vampires?
You wanted to become one yourself.

STEVE

Yeah, I wanted to, but you did.
You stole my dream. You stole my destiny.

DARREN

Are you crazy? I did it to save your life. That was the deal. Me for you.

55.

STEVE

(UNHINGING)

Liar. You told him I was evil.
You planned this all along. And you'll pay! You'll pay --
Darren jams the stake under Steve's throat. That stops him struggling. The points jabs him as he swallows.

DARREN

I want you to leave...
Steve is just beginning to realize how strong Darren is now.

DARREN

I want you to leave and forget you ever saw me. Understand?
Scared, he nods. Darren shoves him away, brakes the stake in two. Steve heads away, looks back over his shoulder.

STEVE

I'm going to hunt you, Darren. You and the other one. Crepsley. I'll

put a stake in you and burn you to
ashes. I'll make sure you never
come back from the grave again.
WHAM. Steve walks right into Crepsley. He picks Steve up by
the shoulders, pulls him close. With a voice like Death...

CREPSLEY

If we ever meet again, I will show
you loneliness you cannot imagine.
Steve trembles in fear. Crepsley lets go. Steve takes off
running. Crepsley looks to Darren.

CREPSLEY

Do you still question his blood?
Darren thoughtful, doesn't know what to think.

DARREN

Would a stake through the heart
kill a vampire?

CREPSLEY

Yes. But so would getting hit by a
truck if it was going fast enough.
Steve finally disappears from sight. Crepsley sighs.

56.

CREPSLEY

He'll be trouble before it's over.

DARREN

Before what's over?

CREPSLEY

This adventure we're on. Shall we
start?
Darren hesitates, looks to the twinkling lights of his city.

CREPSLEY

You'll get used to it after awhile.
Vampires are always saying goodbye.
A beat, then Darren looks back at him.

DARREN

Let's go.

CUT TO:

THE SUN

As it blisters up into, then rises above the horizon.
Sunrise. Ominous if you're a full vampire.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL OHIO MOTEL - SUNRISE

On the edge of the highway. Silhouetted against the sun.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SUNRISE

Darren jams a rolled towel along the bottom of a closed
door.

DARREN

How's that? Dark enough?

CREPLEY'S VOICE

(on the other side)
Better.

DARREN

It's sunrise.

CREPLEY'S VOICE

I know the time. I know more about
the sunrise than anyone alive.

57.

Crespley sounds irritated. Darren gets mischievous.

DARREN

Maybe I'll wait until noon and then
open every door and curtain in the
place.

A long tense silence as Darren awaits Crespley's reply.

MOTEL BEDROOM

Crepsley is a shadow among the shadows. He climbs into bed.

CREPSLEY

Yes, sunlight would kill me. My electrons are different than a human's. But it would take several hours of exposure. I'd have plenty of time to kill you before I closed the curtains and went back to bed. Crepsley pulls the blanket up over his head.

MOTEL LIVING ROOM

As Darren considers this...

CUT TO:

DOORWAY - LATER

Darren doing pull-ups, a hand on either side of the top jamb.

DARREN

242... 243... 244...

It's almost effortless. Bored rather than tired, Darren drops to his feet. (He still wears his burial suit.)

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Darren watching the cars go by on the highway, spots...

DARREN

Minnesota...

Darren jots this state down on a LIST he's keeping. About twenty state license plates so far.

CUT TO:

58.

INT. COUCH - MOTEL ROOM - SUNSET

A TV droning. Darren asleep. Bathed in a golden glow that flickers out as the sun sets. The bedroom door opens. Crepsley steps over, looks down at his snoozing assistant. Crepsley CLAPS his hands together, nearly against Darren's ear. Crepsley smiles as Darren jolts awake.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOPPING MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Getting late, stores closing. The parking lot nearly empty. Darren and Crepsley are on a walk and talk.

CREPSLEY

We can die violently. Accidentally or otherwise. But we also grow old. A full vampire will age one year for every ten human years he's alive. A half-vampire like you: one for every five.

DARREN

I don't understand.

CREPSLEY

I was born in 1774. I became --
Crepsley looks back to where Darren has stopped short.

DARREN

1774?

CREPSLEY

Should we do the math or not?
Darren nods. Crepsley motions him to keep up.

CREPSLEY

I became a vampire when I was 20 years old. In 1794.

DARREN

1794?

CREPSLEY

In Paris. The days of the Terror. Heads in baskets. Guillotines up and down all day. Really when humans put their minds to it, we vampires can hardly compete.

59.

Darren's stare jogs him back from the good old days.

CREPSLEY

Math. 1794. So I've been a vampire now for 211 years. Hmm? Darren nods again, still with him.

CREPSLEY

I age 1 year for every 10, so, 211 divided by 10, I've aged about 21 years in that time. That 21 plus my first human 20 makes me look about 40.

DARREN

But altogether you're 211 plus 20. You're really 231 years old.

CREPSLEY

Exactly. You're going to be a teenager for a very long time. They walk on a few steps as Darren thinks this over.

DARREN

Where do you keep your car anyhow?

CREPSLEY

What car?

DARREN

The one you were driving around my town in. The old black one.

CREPSLEY

I've never owned a car, Darren. I don't need one.

DARREN

It was near school one day. It followed me home a few days later.

CREPSLEY

And you saw me behind the wheel?

DARREN

I couldn't see who was driving.

CREPSLEY

It wasn't me.

As Darren considers this, Crepsley stops suddenly.

60.

CREPSLEY

There...

Ahead: just more parking lot. A WOMAN exiting a BOOKSTORE.

DARREN

What?

CREPSLEY

Dinner.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The woman nears her car. A chirp as she unlocks it with her remote. She opens the back door, sets the book bag on the seat. Suddenly she turns, like someone called her name.

WOMAN

Yes?

Only nobody's there. She shrugs it off, closes the back door. But hesitates at the driver's side door. Then she starts walking away, toward a back area of loading docks.

CUT TO:

DARREN & CREPSLEY

Watch from a dumpster by the loading dock. She walks right toward them. One look at Crepsley's face and we know he must be willing her over. Darren looks terrified. But the air shimmers and Crepsley has disappeared. The woman steps up, stops across from Darren. As she frowns, tries to figure out who he is and how she got here...

DARREN

Go. Run.

But Crepsley appears beside her. He 'breathes' into his hand, 'guides' the air into her face. He catches her as she passes out. Darren is horrified.

DARREN

Did you kill her?

CREPSLEY

I put her to sleep. She'll be like this 15 minutes. When she wakes up, she won't remember a thing.

61.

Crepsley eases her to the ground, finds a vein on her wrist.

DARREN

Will she become a vampire?

CREPSLEY

No. She'd have to share y blood for that to happen.

DARREN

Don't take too much.

CREPSLEY

A vampire who feeds often can control himself. One who drinks only when he must can end up feeding wildly. He uses one of his fingernails to open the vein.

CREPSLEY

The hunger inside us must be fed to be controlled. To be civilized. It's what separates us from... the others.

DARREN

What others?

But as blood oozes, he takes the woman's wrist to his mouth. Darren is repulsed, but can't look away. Crepsley takes a few deep swallows, then holds the wrist out to Darren.

CREPSLEY

Your turn.

DARREN

No. I won't.

CREPSLEY

Darren...

DARREN

I'll never do it.

Crepsley runs his tongue over the cut, rubs the saliva in.

CREPSLEY

You can lead a vampire to blood,
but you can't make him drink.

DARREN

I'm only half-vampire.

62.

CREPSLEY

No matter, you need blood to live
now. You'll drink eventually.

When you're hungry enough.

The wrist is clean, the cut gone. A barely perceptible scar.

DARREN

I'll die first.

CREPSLEY

(ANGER FLASHING)

Don't be stupid. You may abstain
tonight, but you must feed soon.

Crepsley stands to go, then stops short. Tense, he looks
about, more hunted animal than man. As he shrugs it off.

DARREN

What is it?

As the woman starts to stir...

CREPSLEY

Nothing. Let's go.

DARREN

Something out there scares you.
What is it?

CREPSLEY

The thought of spending another
minute with you.
Crepsey turns and walks, but Darren's right.

CUT TO:

INT. HAMBURGER JOINT - NIGHT

The WAITRESS sets a juicy BURGER down across from Darren.
Crepsey sits across from him.

CREPSLEY

We still need to eat food, too. I
just don't need it tonight.
Darren just sits there. Silently as tears begin to run down
his cheeks. Crepsley is exasperated.

CREPSLEY

Now what?

63.

DARREN

The blood... I wanted it. I
wanted to drink it.

CREPSLEY

Of course you did! You're a
Crepsey catches himself. He is not without some compassion.

CREPSLEY

I'm sorry. It was wrong of me to
blood you. You're too young. But
it's done. Like the entire history
of the world up to this moment.
Darren quietly cries. Crepsley pulls two paper napkins from

the dispenser, hands them to him.

DARREN

Thank you.

Darren turns to face the window as he wipes his eyes, nose. Then he sees it: parked across and down the street...

A black 1966 Lincoln Continental.

Darren looks back at Crepsley.

CREPSLEY

(RE: HAMBURGER)

Eat. Let's not waste anymore food tonight.

DARREN

The car...

Crepsley follows the finger as Darren points.

DING DING! The bell over the diner door rings...

CLOSE ON DARREN

As he looks back over his shoulder at the door.

DARREN'S POV

MR. TINY comes through the front door pimpin'. Peter Lorre on steroids. Scary, done up like a Las Vegas high roller.

TABLE

Darren knows trouble when he sees it. He looks back at Crepsley, but the vampire is gone! Vanished.

64.

MR. TINY

(STEPPING UP)

Darren Shan, we meet at last.

Darren just looks up at him. The guy is practically leaking nastiness no matter how avuncular he tries to be.

MR. TINY

You're quite a boy. Sacrificed everything to save a friend.

DARREN

Where'd you hear that?

MR. TINY

A little bat told me.

Mr. Tiny takes a french fry off Darren's plate, eats it. Darren looks around. Where the hell did Crepsley go at a time like this? Mr. Tiny knows what he's thinking.

MR. TINY

Oh, he's still here.

DARREN

Who is?

MR. TINY

Crepsley. Trying to stay alive.

It's so quiet around them Darren can hear a clock TICKING. It's a heart shaped POCKET WATCH Mr. Tiny holds on a chain.

MR. TINY

Would you like to see?

DARREN

See what?

The air seems to buzz as something 'passes'.

MR. TINY

Why the fight of course. Boys like to watch fights, don't they?

Mr. Tiny hefts his watch. It almost seems to melt into his palm. As he pulls the winding knob out with a CLICK...

As Darren and Mr. Tiny blink out, disappear from the

booth...

CUT TO:

65.

INT. HAMBURGER JOINT - NIGHT (IN THE FLITTING WORLD)

Darren and Mr. Tiny reappear in the booth, but the restaurant's patrons are slowed to near motionlessness. A battle royal going on. Crepsley fighting three VAMPANEZE.

All three are sinewy, whipcords with blotchy purple skin. Crepsley stands surrounded in the middle of the restaurant. Whirling, hand fighting. Blocking their thrusts and blows. Darren moves to stand. Mr. Tiny pushes him back to his seat. Crepsley takes one down with a violent leg whip. He drives the second one back into the third knocking both back. A look to Darren and then he's back on LEG WHIP who's

getting

to his feet. Crepsley drives his flat hand forward, his nails tearing into the vampaneze's throat. As leg whip's hand instinctively goes to his throat to stem the blood, Crepsley grabs his free hand, sends him airborne.

CUT TO:

INT. HAMBURGER JOINT - NIGHT (REAL WORLD)

As leg whip 'unflits'. The patrons react to him soaring over the counter, slamming into the wall --

CUT TO:

INT. HAMBURGER JOINT - NIGHT (IN THE FLITTING WORLD)

The patrons near frozen again. Leg whip sliding ever so slowly down the wall. Crepsley and Sinewy One & Two FIGHTING at full speed.

Sinewy One pulls Crepsley's arm up behind his back. Crepsley HOWLING as we hear the bone BREAK.

Mr. Tiny grabs Darren by the wrist, pulls him toward the door. Behind them...

Crepsley drives the back of his head into Sinewy One's face at the same time as Sinewy Two swings in his open palm... Sinewy One releases Crepsley who disappears as Sinewy Two slices open Sinewy One's throat.

As Mr. Tiny pulls Darren out the door...

CUT TO:

66.

INT. HAMBURGER JOINT - NIGHT (REAL WORLD)

Crepsley appears. Leg Whip hits the floor. Blood splashes

the wall as Sinewy One appears, dropping to his knees.
As Leg Whip stands, Crepsley charges, 'shoulders' him
halfway

through the wall. Patrons SCREAM, react, scatter.
As Crepsley grabs a knife...

CUT TO:

EXT. HAMBURGER JOINT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT (FLITTING WORLD)

Darren struggles as Mr. Tiny pulls him along. Behind,
through the diner windows, WE SEE Patrons frozen in flight.
Sinewy Two near frozen in fight with Crepsley who is in mid
swing with the knife in his head.
Mr. Tiny and Darren stop across from YOUNG MURLOUGH.
Humanoid in shape, monstrous in visage. Bloated, his skin
albino white with purplish mottling and red crisscrossing
veins. He must weigh 300 pounds, but NFL nose tackle style.

MURLOUGH

Smell the blood. The lovely blood.
His eyes narrow at the sight of Crepsley, his mouth widening
to show two rows of sharp filthy teeth.
Darren needs to do something. He eyes the watch in Mr.
Tiny's hand. He grabs it with his free hand, thumbs back in
the winding knob. As Murlough disappears from view...
The WINDOW EXPLODES as Sinewy Two hurtles out.
Darren tosses the watch high in the air. Mr. Tiny releases
him to move to catch it.
Darren rushes back toward the restaurant.
Mr. Tiny catches his watch.
Crepsley meets Darren. Crepsley's broken arm hangs uselessly
from his side.
Murlough appears alongside. He grabs Crepsley by the throat,
lifts him off the ground.
Crepsley arcs the knife into Murlough's shoulder.
Murlough staggers, lets go.

67.

Crepsley takes Darren's hand and they flit, disappearing.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT (IN THE FLITTING WORLD)

Beyond the hamburger joint. The world beginning to streak past them. The asphalt begins to blur beneath their feet, passing cars like they were standing still. But Crepsley heaves for breath. In pain. Darren looks back over his shoulder...

DARREN'S POV

Murlough follows. Closing ground.

DARREN & CREPSLEY

DARREN

It's behind us!
Crepsley bears down, the buildings streaking by. But...

MURLOUGH

Closes regardless, relentless, death in his eyes.

CREPSLEY

Almost out of gas. But looking ahead. Clocks in an instant: a RED LIGHT AHEAD. Cars STOPPED. A CAR FROZEN having just crossed the INTERSECTION. HEADLIGHTS from a blind corner. Crepsley slows. Just as Murlough's about to catch him from behind... Crepsley comes out of flit mode, disappears. As Murlough FADES after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT (REAL WORLD)

Darren and Crepsley appear on the far side of the crossing. Murlough comes out of flit in the center. WHAM! The headlights Crepsley saw frozen, but coming from the blind corner, become a PICK-UP - broadsiding Murlough! He goes up over the hood, SMASHES against the windshield. As Darren and Murlough disappear again...

68.

The pick-up brakes. Murlough doesn't. He tumbles off the hood, sprawls hard into and skids along the street. A beat and he rolls to a sitting position, looks around. No Crepsley in sight. Blood runs out of one of his ears. As he wipes it, smearing it across his cheek...

PICK-UP DRIVER

(RUSHING OVER)

Hey, man, are you okay?!

He stops short when he sees Murlough's face. Murlough stands, SWATS the driver aside.

The Lincoln screeches to a halt alongside him. Murlough climbs in. The Lincoln tearing away.

CUT TO:

EXT. STATE HIGHWAY - DAWN

The sky getting lighter. A SIGN: Now Entering Pennsylvania. The air shimmers as something flits past... WHOOSH!

CUT TO:

EXT. HUNTING CABIN - WOODS - DAWN

Boarded up. Abandoned. Clutching his arm, Mr. Crepsley kicks at the door, splinters it. Opens a gap. Darren reaches through, unlocks it. As they step inside, the first rays of the sun appear through the trees.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOT CELLAR - DAWN

him. Crepsley climbs down a few steps, closes the door behind
Barely any light, but some.

CREPSLEY

Find a blanket. A rug. Cover it.

CUT TO:

INT. HUNTING CABIN - DAWN

floor. Darren drags a CARPET over the root cellar door in the

ROOT CELLAR

It goes black except for a glint in Crepsley's eyes. He sighs, settles down on the ground. Worn out.

69.

DARREN'S VOICE

Are you okay?

CREPSLEY

My arm's broken. But it should be fine in a day or two.

INTERCUT THE FOLLOWING:

Sunlight fills the kitchen. Darren sits, exhausted.

DARREN

Who were they? Vampires?

CREPSLEY

No. The one with the watch was Mr. Tiny. Very dangerous.

DARREN

How dangerous can a man named Mr. Tiny be?

CREPSLEY

Who said he was a man?

DARREN

Then what is he?

CREPSLEY

Mr. Tiny can't be explained. He needs to be experienced.

DARREN

(FRUSTRATED)

And the purple guy. What was he?

CREPSLEY

A vampaneze.

DARREN

Yeah? Keep talking.

CREPSLEY

Long ago humans were looked upon as animals by some vampires. Cattle to be slaughtered. Laws were

passed to forbid needless killing.
It made it easier to pass unnoticed
among humans if we didn't murder
them. Most vampires obeyed...

DARREN

But some didn't?

70.

CREPSLEY

Seventy vampires broke away,
declared themselves a separate
race. The Vampaneze. Over time
their appearance changed, their
numbers grew. They believe it's
wrong to feed from a human without
killing it.

DARREN

What? That's crazy.

CREPSLEY

They believe those of us who feed
in small amounts live like leeches.
In shame. It led to war.
Crepsey touches the scar on his face, remembers.

CREPSLEY

The last one nearly destroyed us
all. There's been a truce for many
years now.

(A BEAT)

Will you be alright while I sleep?
Darren looks around at the dilapidated crap heap he's in. As
he tries to hold his heart together...

DARREN

Oh yeah... This is so much better
than where I used to be...
Crepsey hears the strain in his voice. Knows what's best
for both of them..

CREPSLEY

What do you think of rejoining the Cirque du Freak? Until you get on your vampire feet so to speak.

DARREN

Half vampire.

CREPSLEY

Yes, yes. Three-eighths if you want. What do you think?
As Darren thinks...

CUT TO:

71.

EXT. MR. TALL'S AIRSTREAM TRAILER - NIGHT

The Cirque is camped by an ABANDONED FACTORY. Neo-Gothic in scale and mood. Lit up for a performance. Mr. Tall, pulls on his jacket, shouts orders.

MR. TALL

Show time in twenty minutes.
Someone tell Rhamus to get his stomachs in gear!
He's surprised to see Crepsley and Darren walk up the road.
Crepsley's arm seems much better now.

MR. TALL

Larten'Crepsley! As I live and breathe. I thought it would be years before I saw you again.
Mr. Tall looks to Darren, throws a surprised look to Crepsley. Crepsley nods. 'Yes'.

MR. TALL

Darren Shan. You've come a long way since the last time I saw you.

DARREN

I liked it better where I was.

MR. TALL
I'm sure.

CREPSLEY
Do you still have my coffin?

MR. TALL
Of course. You're really back?

(CREPSLEY NODS)
Perhaps you could do the show tonight? A few of us are absent or ill this evening.

CREPSLEY
I'd be delighted.

MR. TALL
Mr. Shan will have to pull his weight as well. I'll give him to Evra. Evra! EVRA!

(LOOKING ABOUT)
I hope I haven't gone from one unreliable boy to two.

72.
Evra arrives. The snake boy from the first Cirque show.

MR. TALL
Evra, my industrious wonder. Here is Darren. Put him to work with you. Show him the snakey ropes. As the two boys consider each other...

MR. TALL
Off with you. Go!
As the boys head off, Mr. Tall looks over at Crepsley.

MR. TALL
You blooded a child, Larten? What were you thinking?

CREPSLEY

You don't approve?

MR. TALL

I don't matter. What will the vampire generals say when they hear about it?

CREPSLEY

I'm no longer part of their domain.

MR. TALL

So you say. They may disagree.

CUT TO:

EXT. CIRQUE CAMP - NIGHT

As Darren and Evra make their way through.

EVRA

What do you do? Me? I'm a snake boy. I do a whole snake thing. Evra goes into a slithery snake walk for a few steps to illustrate. It's strange. Funny. Evra looks back over.

DARREN

Do you eat mice?

EVRA

Big Macs actually. They share a LAUGH. Evra 'high fives' Darren. Fast friends.

73.

As they continue, Darren looks at the palm of his hand. A few of Evra's SCALES have come off and are stuck there.

DARREN

I caught your act in the last town. Pretty cool.

EVRA

Thanks. I'm not doing it tonight. My snake caught a cold.

DARREN

Snakes can catch cold?
Evra nods, then SNEEZES himself.

EVRA

Still gotta work the floor though.
Ushers. We get the seats filled.
They pass PEOPLE all hurriedly crossing the camp.

DARREN

Who are they all?

EVRA

The backbone of Cirque du Freak.
They do the driving, the tent
pitching, the potato peeling even.

DARREN

How did they end up here?

EVRA

Most wandered in. If Mr. Tall
likes them, they stay.
Darren's eye is caught by the WOLFMAN. He's being pushed
toward the factory building by several of the blue-robed
LITTLE PEOPLE. The wolfman's yellow eyes are on Darren as he
rumbles a low, guttural growl.
Darren is so taken that he almost walks into...
Madam Truska. He stops short. In costume, beardless, even
more beautiful than when we first saw her. She considers
Darren, uses a finger to raise his chin. She shakes her
head, smiles. As she continues...

CUT TO:

74.

INT. FACTORY SPACE - NIGHT

An odd setting, but it works well. Stripped, ragged, weird.
Feels like a rave. The lighting dramatic, the concrete walls
ominous. PATRONS take their seat around a stage. A buzz in
the air.

DEBBIE & SAM

About the same age as Darren and Evra, they're here for the show. Debbie is self-assured. Sam is sarcastic to cover his insecurities. Right now it's hard to find a seat. And here are Darren and Evra. Evra looking cool in his green sharkskin, Darren still wearing his burial suit.

EVRA

Can we help you find a seat?

DEBBIE

Are there any left?

EVRA

Only the best seats in the house.
He leads them a few steps over toward a column.

DEBBIE

You guys are with the Cirque?
Darren nods. Sam's a little sarcastic and skeptical.

SAM

Cirque is French, right? Are you
guys French?

EVRA

Oui. Vous etes observateur. Nous
sommes les serpents frangais.
That slows Sam a beat. Evra points out a small platform
eight feet up the column. You have to climb a natural re-bar
ladder to get there. Sam looks dubious, but Debbie smiles.

DEBBIE

Cool... I'm Debbie, this is Sam.

EVRA

Evra Von.
She looks at Darren, waiting.

75.

DARREN

Oh, I'm Darren.

DEBBIE

Is the show great? Say yes. We had to sneak out to see it.

DARREN

I snuck out to see it once, too. And I'm still here. An odd, almost spooky moment. Is he serious?

SAM

Good one, Darren. Hey. Debbie and Darren. Like Bonnie and Clyde. And their friend Evra Von what? That breaks the moment. Debbie starts climbing the re-bar. Sam looks Darren over a beat, picks a thread off his lapel.

SAM

Dude, it looks like the kind of suit you'd wear to a funeral.

DARREN

You have no idea... Evra smiles, sticks out his tongue. Pointy, narrow, Evra sends it up his own nostril. Sam tries to smile, then starts up after Debbie. Freaked out. As Darren and Evra laugh...

CUT TO:

INT. THE STAGE - NIGHT

Mr. Tall under a spotlight. Back in his red hat and gloves.

MR. TALL

Welcome to the Cirque du Freak. We are an ancient circus. Bringing the remarkable to generations...

BACK ROW

Darren and Evra watch from the back, whisper to each other.

DARREN

How long have you known Mr. Tall?

EVRA

Five years.

76.

DARREN

How do you meet someone like him?

EVRA

I was raised in a circus, but not a nice one like this. The owner used to beat me and keep me in a glass cage. I felt like a useless freak. One night I looked out of my cage and saw Mr. Tall just standing there. He watched me until the owner came over and asked if he could help him. Mr. Tall grabbed him by the throat and strangled him to death. Then he opened the cage and said, "Let's go, Evra." He named me that. I added the Von. I've been with him ever since. Darren looks back at Mr. Tall with a new set of eyes.

CREPSLEY'S VOICE

Darren...

Darren turns. Crepsley's back there in the shadows.

CREPSLEY

How do you feel about show business?

CUT TO:

INT. THE STAGE - NIGHT

The audience reacts as Crepsley 'appears' on the empty stage.

CREPSLEY

To be poisoned by a spider may be my fate.
It's Darren's cue. Looking appropriate in his burial suit, he walks out carrying Madam Octa's cage at arm's length.

DEBBIE & SAM

As she realizes it's Darren. Cool.

STAGE

Darren sees Debbie who gives a little wave. As he smiles...

CREPSLEY

Look glum... Miserable...

77.

Darren loses the grin. Crepsley opens the cage. Madam Octa steps to the opening. Crepsley raises the flute, plays. Madam Octa walks out and up to Darren's shoulder where she attaches a web thread. The audience react as she leaps to Crepsley's shoulder and attaches the other end. She dances across to the music, spinning a web as she goes. Darren looks out, sees how much Debbie enjoys it.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MOON - NIGHT

Set against the black sky. Sparks rise up, their source unknown. All very mysterious until... LAUGHTER. Lots of it. Borderline raucous. We follow the sparks DOWN to...

A BONFIRE

Blazing in the Cirque campgrounds. The freaks are eating, drinking wine, relaxing after the show. Like a gypsy camp. Mr. Tall sits with his long legs up on a box, really

enjoying

watching everyone else enjoy themselves.

Evra munches on a sausage he grills on the end of a stick. Darren is all ears and eyes. He likes these people. And he's certainly never experienced anything like this.

Someone starts to play a guitar, someone else beats a drum. Madam Truska starts to dance, the fire flickering against

her

as are all eyes. Then she reaches out, takes Crepsley by the hand. A few moments later, the two of them are engaged in a mad TANGO. It takes the camp's collective breath away.

Even Darren can't help but enjoy it. Crepsley's arm gives him a twinge or two, but only Truska notices.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN OLD VAN - NIGHT

A mattress on the floor inside. Using tape and cardboard, Darren 'blacks out' the windows. Crepsley steps over.

DARREN

Almost done.
Crepsey looks to the sky. Still dark. The moon setting.

CREPSLEY

Darren...
(Darren looks over)

(MORE)

78.

CREPSLEY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to sleep here. We'll
find a nook in the factory.
Crepsey starts off. Darren starts to follow.

CREPSLEY

Mattress.
Darren sighs, goes back to the van to retrieve the mattress.
He starts to pull it out, then stops, nearly doubled over.
Concerned, Crepsley steps over. Darren waves him off,
straightens as whatever it was passes.

DARREN

I just felt sick for a second.

CREPSLEY

You need blood.
Darren gives him a dirty look, grabs the mattress. They
start walking toward the factory.

CUT TO:

EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

The SHADOWS of a loading dock. Crepsley and Darren approach.

DARREN

You think Mr. Tiny might come?
Crepsey shrugs, doesn't answer.

DARREN

Who is he? What does he want?

CREPSLEY

What we want is who we are, don't you think?

DARREN

Can't you give me a straight answer just once?!

CREPSLEY

You won't learn by me telling you. You must live some things to know what they are. Darren sighs in deep frustration. Crepsley has a thought.

CREPSLEY

Okay. Why do you like spiders?

79.

Darren tires to figure what he's getting at? Implying?

CREPSLEY

Did you ever think there was a particular reason? It seems Crepsley knows the answer even if Darren doesn't.

DARREN

No. I never thought about it.

CREPSLEY

That's the trouble with children. They don't think about things.

DARREN

I'm not a child. They stop by the shadows.

CREPSLEY

Are you a man? If you're not a man, you're a child.

DARREN

I'm in between.

CREPSLEY

In between does not exist!
The words echo a moment. Darren no closer to understanding.

CREPSLEY

I'll sleep in here tonight. But
sit outside the van tomorrow and
make it look like I'm there. It's
just caution. Old habits die hard.

VOICE

And old vampires?
Without a sound, someone has reached around the two of them
from behind, a RAZOR-KNIFE held to each of their throats.
They stand dead still. We can make out the shape of a head
as whoever it is leans in ever so slightly from the dark.

CREPSLEY

Gavner Purl, as always I heard you
coming from a mile away.
CLICK! In his hand by his side, Mr. Crepsley holds a thin
SWITCHBLADE. He presses the steel back ever so slightly.

80.

VOICE

We'll call it a draw then.
The 'voice' pulls back his knives, steps out. It's GAVNER
PURL. He was once handsome, but those days are long gone.
His face is crossed with scars. They vary in size, thickness
and color. Gavner is a warrior, carries himself so.

GAVNER PURL

It's been too long, Larten.

CREPSLEY

Decades now.
They embrace. Darren's trying to catch up.

DARREN

You guys are friends?

GAVNER PURL

I suppose. We once shared a coffin

together. For six months.

DARREN

(SARCASTIC)

Like roommates? To save money?

GAVNER PURL

We were being hunted.

DARREN

Who was hunting you?

CREPSLEY

Never mind. Darren, Gavner Purl.

Gavner extends his hand to shake. Darren sees 'the scars on Gavner Purl's fingertips. Darren raises his own hand so Gavner can see his scars. Gavner looks at Crepsley.

GAVNER PURL

A half-vampire?

CREPSLEY

Of course. We don't make full vampires of our assistants. Gavner Purl looks at Crepsley, stunned.

GAVNER PURL

Nor do we make assistants of children.

(MORE)

81.

GAVNER PURL (cont'd)

(LOSING IT)

A child, Larten? Why?!

CREPSLEY

I have my reasons.

GAVNER PURL

And they are?

CREPSLEY

I don't owe answers to vampires
anymore. I'm exiled from our kind

GAVNER PURL

Self-exiled. And I at least am
owed an answer.
There's a personal history being called upon here. Crepsley
is well aware. Darren again is left out.

CREPSLEY

All I care to say is a boy sought
me out, knew who I was. He asked
me to make him my assistant.
Gavner looks to Darren, suspicious.

GAVNER PURL

And how did you know --

CREPSLEY

(INTERRUPTS)

It wasn't Darren. Another boy.
His blood was bad. I should have
killed him, but I didn't.
Darren reacts. Gavner considers it all.

CREPSLEY

I met Darren shortly after. His
blood was good or I certainly would
have killed him.
Darren reacts again.

GAVNER PURL

How could a boy find you?
Crepsley shrugs. Of course he had help.

GAVNER PURL

Tiny?

He tried to kill us.

CREPSLEY

He tried to kill me. What he wanted with you wasn't determined.

GAVNER PURL

Perhaps you chose the wrong boy.
In Mr. Tiny's eyes.
A moment as they consider the unspoken implications.

DARREN

What are you guys talking about!?
No answer as Crepsley and Gavner lock each other in a look.

CREPSLEY

What's important enough to track down an exile? What is your news?

GAVNER PURL

War.

CREPSLEY

I'm not interested in your wars.

GAVNER PURL

Well the other side is interested or they wouldn't be trying to get rid of you.
Crepsley gets suddenly very angry.

CREPSLEY

I've had enough killing! No more!
You've come to the wrong place. I am the wrong place...
Gavner raises his hands in surrender.

GAVNER PURL

Even so, I'm glad you're alive.

CREPSLEY

(RELENTING)

The sun is coming. Will you stay?

GAVNER PURL

I can still make miles. The war won't wait. And neither will bad news. I have to go.

83.

CREPSLEY

Then travel safely.

GAVNER PURL

Would you mind if I walk a bit with your assistant?

CREPSLEY

Take him with you if you want. He's of little use to me.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - NOT FAR OFF - NIGHT

Darren and Gavner Purl walk. Gavner looks him over.

GAVNER PURL

You look sick. Doesn't Larten feed you?

DARREN

I won't drink blood if that's what you mean. I promised myself.

GAVNER PURL

Why?

DARREN

You'll get insulted. As Gavner waits for Darren to tell him...

DARREN

I'm afraid if I drink blood, I'll become evil. Gavner LAUGHS out loud, catches himself.

GAVNER PURL

The only thing drinking blood will do to you is keep you alive.

DARREN

That's how it would start. I would swear it was just to stay alive.

But what'll I turn into? You're on one side of the fence or the other. My father used to say that and now I know what he meant. The 'father part' chokes Darren up a bit.

84.

GAVNER PURL

You've already turned, Darren. You need to accept what you've already become. There's no going back. They walk in silence a moment. Then:

DARREN

Why did Crepsley make himself an exile anyhow?

GAVNER PURL

He was tired of all the killing. We were at war.

DARREN

With the vampaneze?

GAVNER PURL

Crepsley was once a Vampire General. One of our great leaders. He may seem reluctant, but I assure you, no one is as skilled at killing vampaneze than Crepsley is. I think that's why they'd like to get him out of the way. Kill him off before the new war starts.

DARREN

You've known him a long time?

GAVNER PURL

I was his assistant. He blooded me, as he blooded you. There's almost something comforting in this news. Gavner Purl so proud and strong looking. Darren wants to know...

DARREN

Why'd he choose you?

GAVNER PURL

To teach me to kill vampaneze. Up until now, it's the only reason he ever chooses anyone.

DARREN

Is it why he chose me?
Gavner hesitates, not sure.

85.

GAVNER PURL

That's for Crepsley to say. Not me.
Another brick wall, but Darren accepts it.

GAVNER PURL

Do you know what the biggest danger is to a vampire, Darren?

DARREN

The vampaneze? Mr. Tiny?

GAVNER PURL

No. It's that they live so long they no longer care. Everything they love is left behind until they finally have nothing left to live for. Except death. The fact that he's taken an apprentice seems, to me, a good sign. A sign that he's thinking of living not dying.

DARREN

Lucky for me. Glad I could help.
All the same Darren considers what he's heard. Gavner, meanwhile, considers the open countryside ahead.

GAVNER PURL

A clear run. Good.
Gavner gives Darren one last appraising look.

GAVNER PURL

Stay by him, Darren. Stay by him.
Gavner takes a deep breath. The air around him shimmers, his image bouncing in and out of phase like an electron heating up. And then he's gone.

DARREN

That part is definitely cool.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SUN - DAY

High in the noon sky. PAN DOWN to where Darren stands under a tree by the old van. He concentrates, looks himself over. Nothing. He concentrates again. He's trying to flit.

86.

Very briefly -- the air shimmers around him -- then stops. He looks at his arms. Little WISPS of smoke come off them.

EVRA

(ARRIVING)

What's up?

DARREN

Nothing.

EVRA

(SNIFFS AIR)

It's smells like burnt hair.

DARREN

Don't know. I'm congested.

(SEES SOMETHING)

Hey...

Evra follows his gaze, turns just in time to see:

THEIR POV

Debbie and Sam ducking inside the factory.

DARREN & EVRA

Exchange a look. Start after them.

CUT TO:

INT. FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Where the show was the night before. Light streams down from gaps in the decrepit roof. No sight of Debbie and Sam as Darren and Evra make their way in.- They pause at a CREAKING coming from somewhere overhead. As they move...

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER FLOOR - FACTORY - DAY

Darren and Evra come off a rickety staircase, pass through a half-rotted door. There are holes in the roof overhead and huge gaps on the floor where the boards have fallen through. They see Sam, his back to them, staring out a smashed

window.

EVRA

Let's scare the crap out of him...
They begin to creep in, flanking the unsuspecting Sam. But as they get close, a SHAPE drops down behind them!

87.

SHAPE

ARRRGGGH!

Darren and Evra are the ones who jump. The shape is Debbie! She almost falls over laughing. So does Sam.

DEBBIE

You should see the look on your faces.
But Evra and Darren are not laughing.

EVRA

What're you doing here?

DEBBIE

We could ask you the same thing.
We come here all the time. My
grandfather used to work here.

DARREN

Must've been a long time ago.

DEBBIE

He says now it's like one of those
bombed out World War II cathedrals.
Empty of what is used to be.
An odd little moment till Sam breaks it.

SAM

Hey, we loved the show, man. It
was off the hook.

EVRA

(messing with him)
Off the hook, huh? I'll tell all
the freaks you said so.

SAM

Are you guys on your own? Just
traveling. No parents or nothing?

DARREN

No. No parents.
He says it with a little twinge that Debbie picks up on.

SAM

School?

EVRA

No school either.

88.

SAM

You're the luckiest guys on earth.
Wanna switch places?

DARREN

You have to be different to be here.

DEBBIE

Different how?

Evra steps into a slash of sunlight and his skin flashes to life, the green of his scales catching the rays. Debbie's mouth drops. They couldn't see it in the dark last night.

EVRA

Everyone has a place they belong.
The Cirque du Freak is ours.

DEBBIE

I think your skin is beautiful.
That wins Evra over.

DEBBIE

Can I touch it?
Evra holds out his arm. Debbie traces a finger across it.

DEBBIE

Wow. Has it always been this way?

DARREN

He's a snake-boy.

DEBBIE

You shouldn't call him names
because he looks different.

EVRA

It's okay. I am a snake boy.

SAM

You could say you're
dermatologically challenged.
They all LAUGH. Debbie considers Evra a beat, then Darren.

DEBBIE

What about you, Darren? How are
you different?

DARREN

I get scared easy.
Darren looks up toward the rafters. From where she dropped.

DARREN

How'd you get up there anyhow?

DEBBIE

You mean, how did a girl get up there?

CUT TO:

EXT. FACTORY ROOF - DAY

A spot where the roofing is gone, several long RAFTERS stretch out. Darren, Evra and Sam watch Debbie walk out on one. Like a balance beam. The factory floor 70 feet below.

EVRA

Hey, be careful.

SAM

Don't worry. She's like a gymnast.
Debbie moves slowly at first, her arms stretched out for balance. Then she does a hop, a skip. Darren and Evra gasp. She gets to the other side, turns and bows.

DARREN

You're crazy!

DEBBIE

How about you?

DARREN

I got nothing to prove.

DEBBIE

But it'd be easier for you than me.

DARREN

Why's that?

DEBBIE

Because chickens have wings.
She starts chicken CLUCKING. Mad, Darren steps onto a rafter, starts across. He stops in the middle, spins around. Aided immeasurably by his half-vampire skills.

90.

Debbie is impressed.

ANGLE OVERHEAD

The vertigo angle as Debbie walks back out on her rafter. Stops about 4-feet across from Darren.

DARREN & DEBBIE

Darren crosses his arms across his chest. No big deal.

DEBBIE

Let's play mirrors.

DARREN

What's that?

DEBBIE

I do something and you have to copy me. Like this.

Debbie crosses her arms the same way Darren has. He uncrosses them as he realizes.

Debbie reaches down, touches her toes. Darren sighs, then does the same, gets a good look at the floor below.

Debbie takes one foot off the rafter, takes hold of the top of it with one hand, raising the other arm out for balance. Looks like a ballerina.

Evra doesn't like this daredevil stuff.

EVRA

Come on, guys...

Darren hesitates. Not because he won't do it, but because maybe for the first time in his life, he's really fascinated by a girl. Debbie misreads, starts CLUCKING again.

Darren smiles, repeats her move effortlessly.

Without warning, Debbie leaps the gap, lands on the rafter alongside Darren. As she struggles a bit for balance, Darren reaches out and steadies her. As they come face to face.

DEBBIE

There definitely something different about you. I just can't figure it out.

DARREN

Is Sam your boyfriend?

91.

DEBBIE

He's my cousin.

DARREN

Oh...

A funny, awkward beat out on the rafter. Finally...

DARREN

We should get off this.

She nods, a bit smitten. Darren turns. As they start off...

DARREN

Chalk it up to lack of blood, but everything starts spinning.

DARREN'S POV

The area is like a big drain and he's whirling down it.

RAFTER

Darren legs go out and he falls off. As Debbie screams... Darren CATCHES HOLD of the rafter just as he drops past it.

DEBBIE

Hold on.

Debbie grabs his arm. Evra starts out to help, but the rafter CREAKS OMINOUSLY. He stops. Sam states the obvious.

SAM

I don't think it'll hold you, dude.

EVRA

Thanks for the heads up... Bro.

DARREN

(shakes it off)

It's okay. I'm okay.

Darren swings up a leg, hooks it over the rafter. A beat and he's back on top. Debbie relieved. Evra backs up the way he came and in a few seconds they're all safely off the rafter.

DEBBIE

I don't know how you hung on. I

couldn't have.

DARREN

You wouldn't have fallen in the first place... I just got dizzy.

92.

DEBBIE

Maybe you need to eat something. Darren looks at her. She has no idea.

EVRA

Well, the food's down on ground level. Let's get out of here. Sam and Debbie start off, Darren and Evra following. As Sam and Debbie start down a ladder, Darren hangs back a beat.

DARREN

She's kind'of cool, huh? I mean, for a girl.

EVRA

I like her. She asks a lot of questions though.

DARREN

She's just curious.

EVRA

There's no such thing as 'just' with a girl.

DARREN

What makes you such an expert?

EVRA

My snake's a girl.

CUT TO:

EXT. FACTORY - SUNSET

The sun peeps below the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT. FACTORY PASSAGE - NIGHT

Darren walks along, flashlight in hand. Going somewhere. He suddenly stops, listens, not sure if he heard something. A following FOOTSTEP?

MOVE WITH Darren as he continues. As he passes through a doorway, he ducks around the corner. Waits a few beats. Then he leaps out to see who's following. No one's there. Shaking his head, he continues on.

CUT TO:

93.

INT. BOILER ROOM - FACTORY - NIGHT

Darren knocks on a door, waits a beat before it opens and Crepsley emerges from his sleeping place.

CREPSLEY

Good morning, Darren.

DARREN

What's good about it?

Crepsley looks him over, doesn't like what he sees.

CUT TO:

EXT. CIRQUE CAMP - NIGHT

Bustling with activity. Nearly show time. Crepsley stands by an open tent flap watching Darren cross camp. Not well.

DARREN

He stops as Sam and Debbie catch up with him.

SAM DEBBIE

Hey, Darren. Hi...

Darren's happy to see them.

DARREN

You guys are coming to the show again tonight?

DEBBIE

Of course. Evra's doing his snake act tonight.

DARREN

Oh, you came to see Evra.

DEBBIE

And you...
Darren smiles shyly at that.

SAM

I was hoping for Amanda Bynes.
Darren sees Crepsley watching him from the tent.

DARREN

Hey, I'll catch up with you later.
I got some stuff I gotta finish up.

94.

They watch as Darren heads off.

SAM

He's gonna be gone in another day or two. Tonight's the last show.

DEBBIE

I know that. So?

SAM

So stop looking at him like you love him.

DEBBIE

You're such an idiot, Sam.

TENT OPENING

Darren joins Crepsley, a little unsteady.

CREPSLEY

Look at you. You can barely stand.

DARREN

I'm fine.

CREPSLEY

You need to feed. You need blood..

DARREN

No! I won't let you hunt some poor person down for me. I --
Crepsey grabs hold of Darren, hauls him into...

THE TENT

Dark, the inside walls richly embroidered. Medieval.

CREPSLEY

No need to hunt. There's someone here willing to save you.
From the shadows: Madam Truska. Startlingly beautiful. She steps up. Eyes on Darren, she offers Crepsley her wrist.

MADAM TRUSKA

By my own free will, Darren Shan.
As Crepsley's fingernail hovers, ready to open a vein. Darren shakes his head. 'No'.

95.

CREPSLEY

Drink or you'll die.

DARREN

No. I can't. I'm human.
Crepsey releases Truska's arm.

CREPSLEY

You're not! And you'll be nothing!
Darren stands there as noble and sad as a boy could be.

DARREN

I am human. In my heart I am.
A great big TEAR rolls down Truska's cheek. That's the last thing Crepsley needed to see. He's defeated.

CUT TO:

INT. FACTORY SPACE - NIGHT

People in their seats or taking them. Darren is back in his role as usher. He seats two people, wipes at the sweat beading on his forehead. He's getting sicker. He sees Debbie. She and Sam are already seated across the way. She smiles, waves. Darren forces a smile,, waves back. Looking for more patrons, Darren nearly walks into... A FIGURE. A hat pulled down obscures his face.

VOICE

An usher in the house of usher.
And I can't seem to find a seat.
Darren frowns at the odd voice, but leads down the aisle.

DARREN

This way.
Darren brings him down to a handful of seats. The figure looks up from under the brim of his hat. It's Mr. Tiny.

MR. TINY

Join me.

DARREN

I don't think so.
As Darren moves to go, Mr. Tiny clamps a hand around his wrist. Like iron. He sits, pulling Darren down beside him.

96.

MR. TINY

It's time we had a few moments.
Folks involved in epic struggles
should get to know each other.
Darren doesn't answer.

MR. TINY

Has Crepsley told you about me?
Explained me?

DARREN

He said you can't be explained.

You need to be experienced.

MR. TINY

He gives me too much credit.

DEBBIE

Hey, Darren.

Darren looks up to see Debbie and Sam. Oh no...

DEBBIE

We're gonna sit on this side.

SAM

Cuz we miss you so much.

She digs Sam with her elbow. They sit just a row in front.

MR. TINY

(WHISPERS)

Choosing sides can only lead to
trouble. Never, ever choose sides
unless it's your own.

DARREN

You've chosen the vampaneze.

Mr. Tiny laughs, slaps his knee even.

MR. TINY

Is that really what you think? A
smart boy like you?

And the lights drop. A trumpet blasts and all is silent.

ON THE STAGE

The little people wheel out a CAGE. There's a gurgled GROWL.
The little people retreat. Several audience members lean in,
then SCREAM as the wolfman CRASHES to the front of the cage.

97.

A white spot shines down on Mr. Tall.

MR. TALL

Ladies and Gentlemen...

DARREN & MR. TINY

MR. TINY

.subjugators and saps...

MR. TALL

Welcome to the Cirque du Freak. We
are an ancient circus...
As Mr. Tall drones on...

MR. TINY

Oh, his speeches are impossible.
Mr. Tiny opens his free hand. His pocket watch melts up into
view from his palm. Time begins to speed up around them.
Mr. Tall's voice speeds to a BUZZ as he 'keystone cops' off
the stage and Rhamus 'keystones' on. The audience's small
movements become rattles and shakes.
Only Darren and Mr. Tiny are at normal speed.

MR. TINY

I'm not so complicated, Darren.
During war there are those who
profit. A war between vampires and
vampaneze would have terrible
consequences. Therefore...

DARREN

Terrible profits.

MR. TINY

Excellent. I am a profiteer. I
exact fees and gains. I'm simple.
On stage, Madam Truska exits and Evra 'keystones' through
his performance with his snake.

MR. TINY

Did Crepsley tell you of the
prophesy?

DARREN

What prophesy?

MR. TINY

They say the final battle between
vampires and vampaneze will be
decided by a child. That's why the
vampires won't blood children. To
avoid the end of the world.
As these words are pondered by Darren...

MR. TINY

I think I underestimated you. I
think you could be wonderful.

DARREN

I think you're a creep. I think
you suck.

MR. TINY

Too bad.
Mr. Tiny closes his hand around the watch. Time returns to
normal. The applause for Evra slowing down to normal speed.
As he walks off the stage, Debbie looks back at Darren.

DEBBIE

He was great!
As she looks back to the stage someone sits on Darren's
side. Collar pulled up, head wrapped in a scarf. Murlough!

other

MURLOUGH

(low; re: Debbie)
Is it Dar-wren's girlfriend?

DARREN

Forget about her --
Murlough takes hold of Darren's other wrist. Still low:

MURLOUGH

She has plenty of lovely blood
inside. Inside, outside, hmmm?
Darren struggles. Murlough pulls him close, HISSES in his
ear, flashing those filthy teeth.

MURLOUGH

I don't care about humans. I don't
care about you. But the vampire -
Larten Crepsley - him I care about.

(ALMOST SHY)

Murlough is a vampire killer.

99.

On stage: the spotlight hits Crepsley.

DARREN

You guys are in trouble. There's more than one vampire now. Gavner Purl is here. Murlough reacts to the name. Does not like it.

MURLOUGH

Have you seen Purl Gavner's face? Young Murlough sliced it for him.

MR. TINY

Darren, you're a liar. He's a thousand miles gone by now. And master Crepsley is right there. As he points at Crepsley...

CREPSLEY

Holding Madam Octa's cage. Aware something's 'in the air'.

MURLOUGH

Shimmers, phases into flit mode. Disappears.

DARREN

Crepsley! Look out! The audience LAUGHS. Like Darren's worried about Madam Octa. Debbie looks back, knows something is wrong. Sees Mr. Tiny's hand around Darren's wrist.

STAGE

As Murlough 'appears' alongside Crepsley. Madam Octa's cage drops to the stage as Murlough knocks Crepsley fifteen feet through the air. He lands flat on his back. The audience CHEER! Think it's part of the show. Murlough reaches into his jacket, produces a razor-sharp

LONG

KNIFE in either hand. Crepsley pops to his feet. As his own single BLADE 'switches' to life in his hand...

DARREN & MR. TINY

As Darren struggles, Mr. Tiny switches his grip to the back of the boy's neck. That holds him.

100.

STAGE

CHEERS as Murlough charges forward, the long knives pinwheeling in his hands. His attack is brutal and blunt. Crepsley is driven back, parrying each thrust and attack as it comes. Sparks fly as the blades connect. From out of nowhere, Crepsley adds a BACKHAND to the mix. It catches Murlough hard across the chops.

OFF STAGE

Mr. Tall and Evra watch. Not knowing what to do.

STAGE

Murlough swings back wildly. Crepsley catches the blade in Murlough's left hand with the one in his right. Crepsley catches Murlough's left wrist, the second blade dangerously close to retracing the scar on Crepsley's face. Crepsley throws himself back, sending Murlough head over heels across the stage and SLAMMING into a concrete wall.

DARREN

Concentrating. Trying to flit.

STAGE

Murlough rolls to his feet, charges. It's brute force versus style. But as Crepsley moves to sidestep, Murlough's not so brutish after all. He matches the move -- Buries one of his knives into Crepsley's stomach. Crepsley reacts, frozen in shock.

DARREN & MR. TINY

The audience around them unsure. Many shocked. It's part of the show, right? Darren sees Murlough raise the other knife to finish Crepsley off. Darren trembling, phasing. And Mr. Tiny's holding nothing but air. Darren is gone.

DARREN (FLIT WORLD)

Speeding down to the stage. The dagger descends in slo-motion, but it's only a centimeter or two from it's target.

101.

STAGE

Darren reappears, leaps onto Murlough's back, knocks him off target. As Murlough staggers right, Crepsley staggers left. Murlough regroups, charges after him. Badly hurt, stumbling, Crepsley falls off the edge of the stage. Disappears. ROARING, Murlough grabs Darren. They disappear as well.

MR. TINY

Sighs. This is not how it's supposed to go. Sam and Debbie leave their seats, head for the stage.

CUT TO:

INT. FACTORY - NIGHT (FLIT WORLD)

Murlough with Darren in tow, looking high and low for Crepsley. Moving past the barely moving Mr. Tall and Evra.

CREPSLEY (FLIT WORLD)

His back to a wall. Trying to hold it together. Frozen PATRONS facing the exit beyond. As he loses his flit power, the patrons suddenly resume real speed for the exits.

CUT TO:

INT. BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

The old power plant. Pipes and catwalks. Murlough and Darren here. A chain hangs from the ceiling. Murlough lifts Darren, wraps it around his ankle. Hangs Darren upside down!

MURLOUGH

CREPSLEY!

CUT TO:

CREPSLEY

Reacting to Murlough's voice.

CUT TO:

BOILER ROOM - FACTORY

Murlough twists Darren's arm. Darren SCREAMS out in pain.

CUT TO:

102.

EVRA

Reacting as Debbie and Sam arrive. They move toward it.

CUT TO:

CREPSLEY

Listening as the scream fades off. Clutching his stomach, Crepsley moves.

CUT TO:

BOILER ROOM - FACTORY

Murlough pulls Darren a little higher. They're face-to-face, though Darren is upsidedown.

MURLOUGH

Crepsley will come for his assistant.

DARREN

He doesn't care about me.

MURLOUGH

Murlough has an assistant, too. A smart one, smarter than you. As Murlough says this, Darren looks past as stepping up, grinning, is Murlough's assistant.

DARREN

Steve?
Steve! Steve holds up his hands so Darren can see the WHITE SCAR on the tip of each finger. He gets closer.

STEVE

Mr. Tiny made my dream come true. Only better. I'm half vampaneze instead of a stupid half vampire. Mr. Tiny says I have a destiny. He says he's gonna make sure of it.

DARREN

Is that who you talked to? Was that the internet guy? Mr. Tiny?

STEVE

(LAUGHS)

Pretty funny, huh? He introduced himself after you left town.

(MORE)

103.

STEVE (CONT'D)

But, I think I've known him a long time in my head. In my bad, bad blood.

Chilling. Maybe Steve is evil. He leans in even closer.

STEVE

He gave me back the dream you stole.

Murlough motions Steve quiet, slaps a hand over Darren's mouth. Listens. Smiles. Whispers.

MURLOUGH

Crepsley comes.

CUT TO:

INT. APPROACH PASSAGE - FACTORY - NIGHT

Crepsley moving forward. Hurting. He slows, stops. As he looks back over his shoulder. Something's behind him.

EVRA, DEBBIE & SAM

Freeze as Crepsley looks back in the direction from which they follow. From their POV, Crepsley suddenly disappears.

SAM

Where'd he go?

They jump as Crepsley appears right in front of them.

CREPSLEY

Evra... Get them out of here.

EVRA

BUT --

Evra knows it's useless. As he nods, Crepsley turns and strides back toward where he had been. Sam and Debbie exchange a look. What the Hell?

EVRA

You guys better go back.

SAM

What are you gonna do?

EVRA

Darren's my friend.

104.

DEBBIE

Ours too.
Sam's not so sure, but he nods in agreement.

CUT TO:

INT. BOILER ROOM - FACTORY - NIGHT

Darren swings back and forth in long strokes like a pendulum,
a rag stuffed in his mouth to silence him.

DARREN'S POV

Sweeping the room. Wait! It fixes on a doorway. There's Crepsley. Looking about, everywhere but at Darren.

BOILER ROOM

Crepsley speaks to 'the room'.

CREPSLEY

I can smell it. Why does it hide?

(STEPPING UP)

The vampire is here.
WHUMP! Murlough drops from above. Lands ten feet in front
of Crepsley. As they begin to arc around each other.

MURLOUGH

The vampire will die.

STEVE'S VOICE

(FROM ABOVE)

Let's get readyyyyyy to rumble!
Crepsley looks up, reacts.

CREPSLEY

Even the creatures of the night
watch too much TV.
Darren swings past through the middle of it all.
Murlough charges.
Crepsley sidesteps Darren, decides to take the fight higher.
He leaps up, swings himself up onto one of the catwalks.
Murlough follows. They use the room steel as monkey bars as
they climb, clash. Violent, quick attacks. Crepsley gaining
a position, abandoning it as Murlough SLAMS in.

105.

DARREN

Has lost sight of them, he can only hear the battle now. He
reacts as Evra, Debbie and Sam rush out. Evra takes hold,
lifts, tries to lessen the load on the chain.

EVRA

Sam, unhook his legs.
As Sam struggles, Debbie pulls the rag from Darren's mouth.

DARREN

Are you guys nuts? Get outta here!

EVRA

It's against our code.
Suddenly unhooked, Darren hits the ground. He looks up at
Evra who grins down at him.

EVRA

Never leave a freak behind.

CUT TO:

CEILING SUPERSTRUCTURE

On the catwalks Murlough draws his knives. Crepsley jumps to the space he wants to defend, draws his own. Murlough counters. Two very serious predators'-at work. The animal kingdom at its killing best.

A charge. Murlough a bull, Crepsley a matador. He redirects one of Murlough's arcing arms, smashing it against a metal housing. One of the vampaneze's knives clatters away.

It's not graphic or bloody, but several times Crepsley's knife finds its way into Murlough's body. It enrages him, but Crepsley continues dealing out punishment.

He's now like a brilliant counter-puncher, even as he inadvertently backs his way into a corner.

But as quarters close in, Murlough's rage works to his advantage. He charges into Crepsley, his lowered shoulder sending Crepsley through the air and into...

And through a BRICK WALL. Into the thin air outside! Still raging, Murlough nearly falls through himself. Instead, he slips, drops about twenty feet down inside the building!

CUT TO:

106.

EXT. ASPHALT - NIGHT

Crepsley falls sixty feet, lands flat on his back, as brick and concrete rain on top of him...

CUT TO:

INT. FACTORY - NIGHT

As Evra pulls Darren along. Debbie and Sam riding shotgun.

EVRA

Come on!

DARREN

Evra. I think I'm dying.

He looks horrible.

DEBBIE

Let's carry him if we have to.
Evra and Sam support him on either side. They continue,
start across part of a darkened backstage area.
A dark rectangular shape looms ahead. We hear a GUTTURAL
GROWL, sees eyes glow in the gloom. They freeze.

EVRA

It's okay. It's the wolfman. He's
in his cage.
They move forward again, the cage becomes visible. But
another SHAPE beside it. Steve. He sets his hand on the
cage's heavy latch. He's going to open it.

EVRA

No don't!

STEVE

Ooops...
Steve lifts the latch. Even he doesn't expect the force the
wolfman hits the door with. Whaanngg! It's out.
Evra steps bravely forward. The wolfman sends him flying.
Sam can't hold Darren up by himself. He doesn't even see the
Wolfman leap over. As Darren sinks to the floor...
The wolfman tears into Sam...

107.

DEBBIE

Reacts in horror.

STEVE

He's more surprised than shocked. Until the wolfman looks
his way. Then he heads for the hills, disappears into the
dark. The wolfman turns back toward Debbie.
She backs away, takes off up a rickety stairway. The wolfman
HOWLS, then follows.
Darren's too weak to follow, near tears in frustration and
regret. He watches after them, then he looks over at Sam.
Sam who is dying. Just a few feet away. His eyes flicker to
Darren's. He tries to say something, but can't.

DARREN

Oh Sam. Oh no...
Darren crawls over, takes Sam's bloody hand.

SAM

Go save Debbie, Darren...
Sam manages the smallest smile. As his eyes drift shut...

SAM

I think she loves you...
From above, we hear Debbie SCREAM. Darren considers Sam's blood, knows what he has to do. Leave his humanity behind and cross the line. He needs to drink Sam's blood.

DARREN

Forgive me, Sam, but I need
strength. I need blood.
As Darren extends his nails over Sam's wrist...

DARREN

We're going to save her together.

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER FLOOR - FACTORY - NIGHT

Debbie backing into a corner. The wolfman almost on her...

108.

Murlough arrives! Pure animal action as he tears into wolfie, sends him retreating, licking his wounds into the darkness. Murlough heaves for breath, pretty beat up himself. And here comes Steve. Cautiously.

STEVE

Is Crepsley dead?

MURLOUGH

Who knows? Young Murlough lives,
but he's hurt.

STEVE

What can I do?

MURLOUGH

What can Dar-wren's girlfriend do?
We need to get the blood inside
outside. Don't we?
Then we hear it: a blood-curdling scream filters up. It's:

DARREN! - BACKSTAGE AREA

He's drunk Sam's blood. He rises. His sickness wicking off
him. Strength descending. Empowered. Furious. He screams
again, the sound taking shape into words.

DARREN

FORGIVE ME!!!

FACTORY STAGE SPACE

The audience who haven't left react as the chilling sound
reaches them.

BACKSTAGE AREA - FACTORY

Fully 1/2 vampire powered, he takes the stairs two at a
time.

UPPER FLOOR

Murlough, looming over Debbie, smiles as Darren arrives.

DARREN

Let her go.

STEVE

Stop being a big shot. This isn't
like stopping some fight at school.

DARREN

Shut up, Steve.

109.

Murlough's eyes go very, very dark. He attacks.
Darren tries to meet the onslaught, but he's bowled over.
Knocked in a heap.
Debbie moves to go after Murlough from behind. She's going
to go down fighting as well. But Steve intercepts her. He's
pretty powerful himself.
Murlough pulls Darren to his feet, stands him up. He swings

his fist in a vicious arc.
Darren just ducks it and Murlough's fist SMASHES right through the wall (an inside wall) alongside Darren's head. Murlough's getting tired of Darren.

MURLOUGH

You need to stand still so you can die.
But as he attempts to pull his arm back through, he can't. He frowns. Then his eyes widen in pain. Murlough jerks his arm back as hard as he can. The wall smashes open as Murlough brings his arm back through with Crepsley hanging onto the end of it.

FACTORY SPACE

The audience who remain chanting: "Refund! Refund!" They react as debris falls from above, smashes to the stage.

UPPER FLOOR - FACTORY

Crepsley brings up his knife.
Murlough catches him by the wrist with one hand. With the other he grips Crepsley by the throat, SLAMS him hard into an I-beam pillar. Again. Then he squeezes. We can hear the cartilage crunching in Crepsley's throat. But Crepsley covers his own right hand with his left. He drives the knife blade INTO MURLOUGH'S HEART!
Murlough looks down at the handle of the knife, then back at Crepsley whose throat he still holds.
Murlough gives him a lopsided grin and then pitches back, falling through one of the holes in the floor. Taking Crepsley with him.

110.

FACTORY SPACE

SCREAMS from the audience as Murlough descends. Somewhere in mid-fall, Crepsley FLITS, disappears. When Murlough hits the center of the stage, he hits it alone. Dead.
As people start for the exits, we see Mr. Tiny's among

them.

UPPER FLOOR

But as Darren stands, it's not over. Steve grabs Debbie, pushes her to the edge where the rafters are.

STEVE

Stay back! Or I'll throw her off!
I mean it!

It sounds like he does. Darren looks intently at Debbie. She looks back. Then, Darren makes CHICKEN CLUCK SOUNDS. Understanding, Debbie tears herself away. To the precipice. But instead of falling, she continues out on a rafter. Steve slides out after her. But as he reaches for her, she deftly skips across the rafters, jumps back to the floor. Before Steve can follow, Darren cuts him off. Below them: rows of jagged, rusty pipes. The remains of a pumping station. Shredded now, broken. Waiting to impale.

DARREN

It's over, Steve.

STEVE

Is it?
Steve lunges. They come together, trading shots, stumbling but still having to make the rafters. A missed footfall will be their last. They separate, try to gain position.

STEVE

You wanna hear something funny?
After your funeral, I went to see
your parents.
They continue circling.

STEVE

And they were fine. They acted
like they barely remembered you.

DARREN

Liar.

Darren lunges, but Steve's ready. He CUFFS Darren in the head. Darren falls, ends up hanging. Steve looms, smiling.

STEVE

(SMILES)

And your sister. She was moving
into your room. They had a yard
sale. I bought some of your stuff.

Steve's foot on his hand. Darren about to die. Oddly:

DARREN

Did you steal money from my mom's purse?

STEVE

What?

DARREN

Did you?
Darren hanging there, dead grim. Steve's curious.

STEVE

Why do you ask? Is knowing that gonna help you rest in peace?

DARREN

No. It's just practically the last thing that ever happened between me and my dad was I was arguing with him.

STEVE

(FLIP)

Least you had a dad to argue with. A fury building in Darren.

DARREN

I was telling him he was wrong about you. That's the last time we had together. Fighting about you.

STEVE

Hate to tell ya. Your dad was right. How do you think we got the money for the dumb tickets? I took it. Just like I'm gonna take you. Steve jams his foot down into Darren's face, but Darren

hangs

on. In fact, with a superhuman surge, he hauls himself up, no matter how many times Steve hits him.

112.

WHAM! Darren lets Steve have it.

DARREN

I miss him.

WHAM!

DARREN

Do you understand?

WHAM!

DARREN

I miss him so much.

WHAM! Steve's arm pinwheel for balance. He's going over. But just as he pitches off the end rafter...

Darren catches him by his belt. Nearly bent backward, he hangs back over the abyss. If Darren lets go, Steve will fall into the spikes below.

Crespley steps up beside Debbie, knows what Darren should do.

CREPSLEY

Kill him, Darren. Do it now so you won't have to do it later.

Darren looks at Steve. A moment they'll remember forever.

DARREN

(SOFTLY; SADLY)

No. He used to be my friend.

Darren flings Steve back the other way. To safety.

DARREN

Start running. Don't ever stop.

Steve hesitates. It wasn't supposed to be like this. Darren starts off the rafter toward him. One last look of hate.

STEVE

Next time...

And he's gone. Disappearing into the dark.

Darren joins Debbie. Nothing left to hide.

DEBBIE

Sam?

Darren shakes his head. Sam didn't make it.

113.

She understands. Darren looks at Crepsley. He's a mess.

DARREN

Are you gonna be okay?

CREPSLEY

I just need to catch my breath.
For a few days. Maybe a week.

DARREN

You think I made a mistake, don't
you?

CREPSLEY

No. I think that you proved
yourself human after all.
Human. As Darren absorbs this kindness, smiles.

DARREN

Half human. What now?

CREPSLEY

What do you mean?

DARREN

There's a war on, isn't there?
Crepsley shrugs.

DARREN

This world is crossed by fences.
You have to decide which side you
stand on.

CREPSLEY

Yes, yes. Black and white fences
crossing very gray fields.

DARREN

It's not gray. I've met the bad
guys. They need to be stopped.

CREPSLEY

I'm not sure it's my fight.

DARREN

But you said it. There's no in
between. And the power of being

alone is never going to be greater
than the weakness. It's our fight.

CUT TO:

114.

EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

As PATRONS try to get as far as they can as quick as they can. We see Steve duck out, blending in. Mr. Tiny's Lincoln Continental pulls up. As Steve gets in...

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - NEAR THE CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Mr. Tall, Evra, Debbie, Darren and Crepsley. Crepsley sets Sam's body down in the grass. It's covered with one of Madam Truska's tent silks. As Crepsley's eyes meet Darren's...

DARREN

(A WHISPER)

He was a good kid. It's weird, but I remember things about him even though I wasn't there when they happened. Even though it's impossible.
A moment as Crepsley nods sadly at this most singular boy.

CREPSLEY

His blood is in you.

MR. TALL

I'll deal with the police when they come. What I'll say, I don't know.

DEBBIE

Say what happened. Some crazy guy showed up. Sam was in the wrong place at the wrong time. They're all quiet a moment.

EVRA

He was brave.

DEBBIE

(SADLY)

For the only time in his life.

DARREN

He didn't die in vain.
A beat.

115.

MR. TALL

Time to fly or flit or whatever you
call it. The sun won't wait all
night.

CREPSLEY

Actually, that's exactly what it
does.
Mr. Tall manages a smile, considers the sky a moment.

MR. TALL

Time will tell what this night has
brought us.

CREPSLEY

Yes. Keep my coffin ready, would
you?

MR. TALL

Always.
As they exchange farewells, Debbie turns to Darren.

DEBBIE

Do you think we'll meet again?

DARREN

You never know.
As she hugs him tight, she whispers in his ear:

DEBBIE

I hope so...

DARREN

(WHISPERS BACK)

Hope is a good word. I hope so,
too.

And so goodbye. Darren and Crepsley start down the road.

DARREN

Where are we going?

CREPSLEY

To meet the Vampire Generals. War
clouds are forming. A storm is
coming. And I have a feeling
you're needed much more than I am.

116.

DARREN

So what are we waiting for? Let's
go.

Crepsley offers his hand.

CREPSLEY

Take my arm.

Darren shakes his head, doesn't need it.

He shimmers, flits into the night.

Crepsley laughs to himself. As he follows...

FADE TO BLACK.