

DRACULA YEAR ZERO

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - SUNSET

The SUN sets behind knife-edged mountains...

One mountain stands apart from the rest. Called BROKEN-TOOTH, its peak is jagged as a crown of fangs.

TITLE CARD: **Transylvania, 1462 A.D.**

VLAD (V.O.)
My country hangs at the far edge of
the Christian world.

We MOVE CLOSER to Broken-Tooth, through untamed FOREST...

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Many of our mountains are too steep
to climb... our forests too thick
to enter.

CLOSER STILL, a RIVER surges at the mountain's base...

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
To my people, these places seem
forbidden. Places where ghosts and
demons dwell.

CROSSING THE RIVER, Broken-Tooth's ancient cliffs tower over us, forbiddingly steep.

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They say that here in Transylvania,
the veil between the land of the
living and the land of the dead is
as thin as silk.
(beat)
I say it's horseshit.

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - DEAD OF NIGHT

PRINCE VLAD DRACULA

Walks alone into his empty courtyard, his cloak trailing like ink. 30s, jet-black hair, noble features set in concentration.

VLAD (V.O.)
I am Prince Vlad Dracula. I rule
Transylvania, as did my father.

A BRACE OF SWORDS waits at a ring of armored DUMMY TARGETS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad peels off his cloak. Bare-chested in the night air, his body is etched with battle scars long healed.

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I have real concerns. The Turks.
We've survived for generations
living under their threat.

Vlad selects a sword -- ATTACKS the targets.

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But their new Sultan has changed
the world forever.

Vlad chops through straw limbs with rising savagery...

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He brought down the walls of
Constantinople. Ended a thousand-
year empire in fifty-four days.
The killing, raping and burning --
that went on for three more,
according to their custom.

Lost in his own dark memories, straw heads are severed...

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
So I smile and I pay what silver
the Turk demands. In return, they
leave my tiny kingdom in peace.

Vlad hacks furiously at the last target. Cuts it to bits.

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'd kill every last one of them...
but they're too many, too cruel.

Dismembered targets are spread across the ground...

VLAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And I have far too much to lose.

MIRENA

Approaches, in bed clothes. Vlad's wife, the Princess.
Early 20s, raven hair, a tiny IVORY CRUCIFIX around her neck.
Usually a bright, brassy spirit... right now she's tired.

MIRENA
I can always tell when the Turk tax
collectors are due. I find bits of
straw in our bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vlad stops, breathing hard. All the dummies have been destroyed. Mirena puts a hand on Vlad to calm him.

MIRENA (CONT'D)
You're home. For almost as many
years now as you were with them.

VLAD
This year is different.

Mirena pulls Vlad away from the ring of targets.

MIRENA
We have to wake early. It may be
tax day in Turkey, but here it's
still Easter.
(off Vlad's look)
Easter? Remember? When our Lord
Christ rose from the dead?

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

VLAD
Are you sure we have to wake early?

Vlad passionately kisses his wife. Mirena runs her hands
across his chest as he carries her into the castle...

INT. BEDROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - LATER

Mirena sleeps. An empty space in bed where Vlad should be.

Vlad sits near a cradle, his INFANT SON INGERAS (pronounced
"In-je-rash") nestled in his naked chest.

Ingeras looks up at his father with curious, happy eyes. And
we see this warrior undone by love for his son.

VLAD
You're safe with me... No one will
ever hurt you.

EXT. BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Weapons are strewn across the mountainside, snapped like
playthings. Armor lies shredded. A brutal fight happened
here recently. BLOOD is everywhere, but there are no bodies.

The blood is MOVING...

...slowly, UP the cliff face... Gravity itself bent under
the greedy will of some unseen force...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WE FOLLOW the blood, crawling up the mountain in a slick sheen... Ropes of it dancing up and up...

CRESTING THE RIM of "broken teeth," the mountain's peak is revealed to be a HIDDEN CRATER. Like a savage mouth opened in a scream. Eons of HUMAN BONES carpet the crater floor.

The blood is sucked across discarded skulls... toward a lair hidden in a crescent of SHADOW.

TITLE OVER BLACK: **Dracula Year Zero**

EXT. CASTLE DRACULA - CITY OF TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Easter Morning sun casts Castle Dracula in gold. The castle towers over the capital city of TIRGOVISTE, tucked against the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains.

The city is a jumble of steep wooden roofs punctuated by church steeples. Bells TOLL in joyous cacophony.

INT. THRONE ROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

Vlad sits on his throne, decked in princely attire. The SILVER SIGNET RING on his hand bears the symbol of a dragon.

A PEASANT SHEPHERD kneels before Vlad. At his side are his eldest son MIHAI, age 15, and four YOUNGER SIBLINGS.

PEASANT SHEPHERD

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

VLAD

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

CAZAN

Nods graciously. 50s, wise and direct, the Prince's loyal advisor. Afflicted with a withered hand and club foot, he relies on a cane.

PEASANT SHEPHERD

Thank you, Prince.

The Peasant Shepherd hugs his children and is escorted OUT.

CAZAN

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD
You'll have very shiny boots.

CAZAN
Your father made me shine my own.

VLAD
I'm not him.

A VILLAGE PRIEST and a THIEF in chains are brought in.

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

Vlad gestures for him to continue.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
(points at the thief)
He stole a chalice from the altar.

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

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

VLAD
God will get his own chance to
judge him.

PRIEST
(bristling)
He desecrated our church. This man
deserves to die.

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

PRIEST
Me?

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

VLAD
(points at the thief)
Strike fast here, in the heart.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD (cont'd)
Or cut him in the gut if you want
him to linger.

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

VLAD (CONT'D)
Or he could be lashed twenty times.

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

VLAD (CONT'D)
I'm starving. Let's eat.

Vlad sees Cazan appraising him, bemused...

VLAD (CONT'D)
What?

CAZAN
You could have just said no.

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

Vlad greets his many guests: the TRANSYLVANIAN PEOPLE are enjoying a feast in the courtyard's open air. Thousands crowd long tables. Rich and poor alike.

Vlad glad-hands a line of RELIGIOUS LEADERS. A magisterial ARCHBISHOP, amongst others. All bow in gratitude...

VLAD
How goes construction?

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

Vlad earnestly clasps the Archbishop's hand.

VLAD
That's not why I'm doing it.

Vlad finds his seat next to Mirena. Ingeras is on display in his cradle, alert, watching the activity...

SIMION "THE WISE"

Rises and bows to Vlad with a flourish. 50s, over-fed, oily charm. The richest and highest ranking of the Boyars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOYARS eat at their own table: the dozen wealthy landowners of the ruling class, each draped in tailored furs.

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

The Boyars raise their cups in resounding support of Vlad.

DIMITRU

Snores through the toast. Head tilted back, drunk. A Boyar, 40s, big as a bear. Lusty, lovable, ferocious in a fight.

Vlad mischievously whispers to two equally mischievous BOYS. The Boys obediently dangle a cured sardine over Dimitru's open mouth... only to be slapped away by their MOTHER.

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

MIRENA
(leaning into Vlad's ear)
I expect they'll want to make
Ingeras Baby Jesus come Christmas.

VLAD
Hmmm... does that make me God or
the cuckold?

She touches her cross, his joke going a bit too far for her.

MIRENA
(eyes to heaven)
Shhh. He might hear you.

VLAD
Forgive me. There's no comparing
us to them. I don't think the
Virgin Mary ever sang tavern songs
to her son.

MIRENA
(blushing)
They help him sleep.

Vlad LAUGHS, kisses her on the forehead...

CAPTAIN PETRU rushes to report to Vlad, bruised and bloodied.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN PETRU
We were ambushed. They took
everything.

VLAD
Who?

CAPTAIN PETRU
It was Gypsies.

Scared, Mirena picks up Ingeras as if that could protect him.

MIRENA
What if we don't have enough to pay
the Turks?

VLAD
No one's taking our son away.

But we see Vlad's worry as he turns to Cazan:

VLAD (CONT'D)
Stall Hamza Bey.
(to Captain Petru)
And somebody go sober up Dimitru.

EXT. TRANSYLVANIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Vlad and his CASTLE GUARD, all ON HORSEBACK. Dimitru
crouches, picks up a fallen SILVER COIN glinting in the dirt.

DIMITRU
Gypsies snatch coin purses. They
don't steal a year's worth of taxes
from the Prince's Guard...

VLAD
They did today.

Dimitru's eyes raise up to the Carpathian range:

DIMITRU
They're headed toward Broken-Tooth.

Mere mention of it fills Dimitru and the men with dread.

DIMITRU (CONT'D)
Even bandits avoid that place.
Even they know it's haunted.

VLAD
Good thing we're not bandits.

EXT. FOREST NEAR BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

Vlad and his men ride through dense, oppressive FOREST...
Dimitru nervously grips a CHARM inscribed with ancient signs:

VLAD
What is that?

DIMITRU
Wards off evil.

VLAD
Where did you get it?

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

Vlad dismissively examines the charm.

VLAD
You were robbed.

Dimitru snatches it back, irritated.

DIMITRU
Your heart's Transylvanian, but you
didn't grow up here. You don't see
them, but they're out there.
Demons, witches...
(holding up the charm)
Silver's the one metal that's pure
straight from the ground. Nothing
unclean can touch it.

VLAD
(off the charm)
That's tin.

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

Riding into a clearing, BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN is revealed...
rising up like an angry god. Vlad's soldiers HALT, giving in
to their fears. Vlad has to regain control.

Moss-covered columns stand nearby -- an ANCIENT ROMAN RUIN.

VLAD (CONT'D)
(addressing his men)
You see these broken rocks
everywhere. The Romans built them.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD (CONT'D)
They ruled the ancient world.
Hard to believe you're their
grandchildren.

Vlad looks his men in the eye:

VLAD (CONT'D)
I need to get that money back.

Vlad keeps moving forward. He doesn't need to look back. He knows his men are following.

EXT. BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

Vlad's men warily ride alongside a RIVER... A STONE BRIDGE connects to Broken-Tooth Mountain, rising from the far shore.

Where the river NARROWS, Vlad spots their quarry:

GYPSIES. Tough outsiders, garbed in aggressive patterns. Twice Vlad's men in number, escorting the stolen WAGON laden with SILVER.

VLAD
Lay down your weapons. You can't
outrun us.

SHKELGIM

Whips more speed from the horses nevertheless, driving the wagon closer to Broken-Tooth... He is the Gypsy Chief. Crafty. Face weathered by wind and sun.

The rest of the Gypsies hang back at Shkelgim's SHOUTED ORDER, spreading themselves in a wall to stop their pursuers.

In unison, the Gypsy wall unsheathes LONG KNIVES...

Vlad's temper flares at their defiance.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Alright then.

Vlad and his men ENGAGE them in a clanging brawl.

A BOLD GYPSY thrusts his knife at Vlad --

Vlad SLAPS the flat of his sword against the Bold Gypsy's hand. Painfully disarming him.

Dimitru's sword-stroke misses a Gypsy, hits a tree instead and is STUCK FAST in the wood. Undeterred, Dimitru knocks the Gypsy cold with a right hook.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But Vlad sees FOUR MORE GYPSIES surround his unarmed friend, poised to kill... No time to think: Vlad TOSSES Dimitru his own SWORD. Now armed, Dimitru barrels into his attackers...

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

DIMITRU

What in God's name is he doing?

Vlad realizes the Gypsies are just stalling them...

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

VLAD

Son of a whore!

Vlad SPRINTS toward Shkelgim... Gypsies move to block him.

ON THE RUN, Vlad grabs a LOG off the forest floor. SPLINTERS it across a couple Gypsies' skulls as he breaks through --

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

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

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

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

Its weight drags him... Vlad digs in his heels... Slows it, but the front wheels slip OFF THE EDGE OF THE EMBANKMENT... The wagon teeters precariously OVER THE WATER...

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

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

VLAD (CONT'D)

Are you insane?

SHKELGIM

Black Sarah came to me in a dream.
She told me what I must do.

VLAD

(dumbfounded)

Dump my taxes in the water?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHKELGIM

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

DIMITRU

(worried)

What is to come?

SHKELGIM

Evil will escape this mountain and
poison all the earth --

Vlad presses the broken knife to Shkelgim's throat. He's
heard enough. A pitiless look in his eyes.

VLAD

You think you can play with my
son's life?

SHKELGIM

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

Finally:

VLAD

The punishment for stealing is
twenty lashes.

Vlad lowers the knife. Dimitru begins binding Shkelgim's
wrists...

DIMITRU

(to Vlad)

You did the right thing. These
Gypsies, they curse people.

SHKELGIM

Only Black Sarah has the power...
But she has been known to take my
advice.

Shkelgim INTONES threatening words in an ancient tongue...
Dimitru swallows hard, stops tying Shkelgim... Vlad's men
back away from the Gypsy, petrified of his magic...

SHKELGIM (CONT'D)

Tell me Prince, are you afraid of
curses?

Vlad PUNCHES Shkelgim across the jaw. Finishes tying
Shkelgim's binds himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VLAD
Make it nineteen lashes.
(sternly to his men)
Can we get my money out of the
river?

Shkelgim pleads with Vlad, all arrogance gone...

SHKELGIM
Please, Prince. You don't know
what you're doing...

Vlad's men heave the wagon up the embankment. Leaving RUTTED
TRACKS in the soil. As everyone catches their breath...

A MIST crosses the river on a cold wind slipping down from
Broken-Tooth. The mist has an odd red tint...

Vlad touches the moisture left on his face. It's BLOOD.

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

Looking up through the mist, Vlad sees the vaguest SHADOW on
a cliff... Vlad squints: is it a man? Then it is gone.

DIMITRU
Ghosts...

SHKELGIM
No. Flesh and blood.

Shkelgim grips a CHARM around his neck. This one is silver.

SHKELGIM (CONT'D)
They are called "Ekimmu". It means
"Departed Spirit." Dead men who
find no rest in the Underworld.

DIMITRU
I thought such things only came out
at night...

SHKELGIM
They love the sun. The dead are
always cold.

Vlad dismisses this nonsense. Turns to his men:

VLAD
We got what we came for.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

As they RIDE from Broken-Tooth, silver in tow, Vlad takes a last look back. We see he's more rattled than he would ever admit...

SHKELGIM
(prays to his god)
Mother-of-us-all, forgive me. I
failed.

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

The Easter feast continues into the night. Peasants DANCE, unaware anything is wrong. However, tension is thick at the table of the Boyars, who have lost their appetite...

Vlad avoids the celebration. He tows the silver wagon into

A SIDE COURTYARD

Cazan is relieved to see Vlad finally here with the taxes.

A cadre of TURKISH SOLDIERS stand at attention. Wearing turbans. Colored in brilliant hues.

VLAD
How long have they been waiting?

CAZAN
Long enough to be annoyed.

HAMZA BEY

Sits in the chair provided him. Emissary from the Turks. A delicate bearing, flush with arrogance.

Hamza Bey speaks in SUBTITLED TURKISH, designated by italics:

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

Vlad chooses to answer Hamza Bey in English:

VLAD
I hope your journey was safe.

HAMZA BEY
(in English)
Sultan Mehmed the Second offers his
congratulations. You are a father.

Vlad does his best to hide his anxiety.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD
(stiffly)
Thank him for his sentiment.

HAMZA BEY
It must be a relief to finally have
an heir. We were beginning to
wonder if you were capable.

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

HAMZA BEY (CONT'D)
It is all here.

VLAD
Then take it and leave.

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

HAMZA BEY
Greater tribute is required. The
Sultan needs your Fortress Giurgiu
on the Danube River...

Red dots indicate a patchwork of sites across Transylvania.

HAMZA BEY (CONT'D)
Also, our soldiers have been tasked
to build a chain of aviaries for
his carrier pigeons.

Cazan shoots a shocked look at Vlad.

CAZAN
Carrier pigeons...

VLAD
The fastest way for troops to
communicate is by air.

Vlad knew this day would come.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Mehmed is invading Europe.

HAMZA BEY
The Danube is a road, and it flows
past your door. It brought Caesar
and Charlemagne, Khan and
Alexander. It is your fate to be a
pebble on the road of conquerors.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAMZA BEY (cont'd)
But the Sultan need not concern
himself with a pebble if it stays
out of his boot.

Vlad steadies himself.

VLAD
Mehmed has no enemies here.

HAMZA BEY
There is one last thing...

Hamza Bey and the Turkish Soldiers march

INTO THE GRAND COURTYARD

As if they owned the place. Vlad follows. The crowd
MURMURS... Castle Guards are unsure of what to do...

Vlad shares an anxious look with Mirena, who rocks Ingeras...

HAMZA BEY (CONT'D)
(announcing to the crowd)
The Sultan requires one thousand
boys to join his Janissary Corps.

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

HAMZA BEY
The Sultan needs soldiers.

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

BRIGHT-EYES

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

HAMZA BEY (CONT'D)
Those age fifteen will fight in
Hungary. Those from ten to
fourteen will be made ready for the
siege on Vienna.

A fire rages inside Vlad...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAMZA BEY (CONT'D)

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

VLAD

I was no Janissary. I was a royal hostage. I kept the peace.

HAMZA BEY

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

Bright-Eyes inspects a RED-HAIRED BOY, age 10, as if he were livestock...

BRIGHT-EYES

Soft, but they will do.

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

BOY'S FATHER

You can't have him.

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

Peasants cower. Dimitru and the Castle Guard watch helplessly. No one dares make a move against the Turks.

Bright-Eyes takes the boy's arm.

BRIGHT-EYES

(to Hamza Bey)

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

Vlad walks up to Bright-Eyes... catches the boy's scared eyes. Recognizes his fear. Vlad moves the Red-Haired Boy safely behind him and into the arms of his MOTHER.

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

Vlad speaks to Bright-Eyes in flawless SUBTITLED TURKISH:

VLAD

You know who I am.

Bright-Eyes hesitates. He knows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HAMZA BEY

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

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

HAMZA BEY (CONT'D)

A thousand boys in two weeks.

Hamza Bey stares at Ingeras. Vlad stiffens as if a blade were pressed to his throat...

HAMZA BEY (CONT'D)

You do not want the Sultan
disappointed upon his arrival.

The Turks LEAVE. Shaken Peasants embrace their sons...
Mirena is stricken, her own son in her arms...

Vlad looks as if he's standing on a gallows.

INT. BEDROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

Vlad lies in bed next to Mirena. Neither can sleep.

Ingeras CRIES. Mirena picks up the baby from his cradle.
SINGS to soothe him, a lilting tavern song... Mirena finally
gives voice to the unspoken fear:

MIRENA

You would never give our son to the
Sultan.

VLAD

No.

Mirena lies the now-sleeping Ingeras back in his crib.

MIRENA

Can you let him take the others?

VLAD

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

(tormented)

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

Vlad struggles to keep his memories bottled up.

MIRENA

I know what you've told me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mirena traces the battle scars on Vlad's bare back.

VLAD
How can you love me?

MIRENA
I know your heart.

Mirena searches for some answer...

MIRENA (CONT'D)
You grew up with Mehmed...

VLAD
There was a time he and I were like
brothers.

MIRENA
Ask him to show mercy.

VLAD
He has no use for mercy.

Vlad twists his signet ring... as the solution becomes clear.

VLAD (CONT'D)
If Ingeras grows up to be like you,
our country will be in good hands.

MIRENA
What are you saying?

VLAD
There's something Mehmed has always
wanted.
(beat)
Me. Fighting at his side. I'll
help him win his war.

Mirena grabs Vlad's soldier's hands, afraid of losing him...

MIRENA
I won't let you go back to them.

VLAD
You have to. I'm worth a thousand
boys.

INT. PRIVATE CHAMBER - CASTLE DRACULA - TWO WEEKS LATER

Vlad shaves in front of a mirror. Torn by thoughts of the
dark future that awaits... He nicks himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad stares at the blood as he dabs his cheek.

EXT. BEDROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

Mirena helps Vlad strap on his BREASTPLATE, hiding her tears.

MIRENA

What if you don't come back?

VLAD

(wiping away her tears)

I will.

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

MIRENA

I can't do this without you.

VLAD

Cazan will help you. You'll lead
our people well.

Ingeras CRIES when Vlad picks him up.

VLAD (CONT'D)

(to Ingeras)

It's me. It's armor.

MIRENA

He's just never seen it before.

EXT. CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

Vlad rides out of his castle with a brave face, splendid in his royal armor. Dimitru and Cazan accompany, heartbroken.

Thousands of Peasants crowd the streets to say farewell. Children are raised to catch a last glimpse of their Prince. The menfolk doff their caps as a sign of respect.

CAZAN

Those children will tell their
children, they saw the finest
Prince this country has ever known.

CARRIER PIGEONS fly above... in and out of the steeple of the city's CATHEDRAL. The house of God is now an AVIARY manned by Turks, who curiously watch the procession from above.

ON VLAD. He cranes his head back to see Mirena holding Ingeras on a castle balcony before they are lost from view.

EXT. DANUBE RIVER - GIURGIU FORTRESS - DAY

Vlad and his entourage ride to the DANUBE RIVER, wide and swift, glittering in the sun.

Upriver, the Transylvanian fortress of GIURGIU (pronounced "Geer-Goo"), squats on an ISLAND, a bridge linked to each shore. Its towering battlements a relic of a prouder time.

Downriver is a staggering sight: Mehmed's invasion FLEET, clogging the river for miles. One thousand ships. Each bearing three hundred men.

Awe reverberates through Vlad's motley force.

DIMITRU

The whole world will be Turk.

Vlad's eyes fix on a grand WARSHIP. On the prow stands a MAN in brilliant GOLDEN ARMOR. Sun glints off him like fire.

EXT. COURTYARD - GIURGIU FORTRESS - DAY

The Transylvanian flag is lowered. A WHITE FLAG is raised. Vlad's force is dwarfed by the incoming TURKISH GARRISON...

GENERAL OMER

Approaches Vlad. 60s. Gray bearded. Tough and shrewd. Supreme Commander of all Mehmed's armies.

GENERAL OMER

(sizing up Vlad)

Kaziglu Bey. You are a man full grown.

VLAD

And you, Omer, are a man grown old.

GENERAL OMER

A good fortress. Your grandfather built it, did he not?

VLAD

To protect our land from the Turk.

General Omer cracks a thin smile.

GENERAL OMER

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

INT. GREAT HALL - GIURGIU FORTRESS - DAY

Vlad, Cazan and Dimitru ENTER the great hall. Mehmed's assembled GENERALS murmur amongst themselves as they eye Vlad with hard-won respect: *Kaziglu Bey... Kaziglu Bey...*

DIMITRU

(to Vlad)

What are they saying? "Kaziglu Bey?"

MEHMED

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

SULTAN MEHMED THE SECOND

Enters in his golden armor. Vlad's age. Radiating power.

VLAD

I left that name behind.

MEHMED

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

(gestures to a table)

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

Mehmed pours thick Turkish coffee. Vlad takes a sip.

VLAD

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

MEHMED

(finishes the proverb in
English)

And sweet as love.

VLAD

*I think your prophet himself once
said, blessed be he who conquers
Constantinople. A prize sought for
a thousand years.*

Mehmed nods graciously at the compliment.

MEHMED

*Europe is child's play compared to
it.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEHMED (cont'd)

Those foolish kings will still be plotting against one another while I raise my flag over their heads.

(beat)

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

VLAD

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

Mehmed smiles, understanding...

MEHMED

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

(sips his coffee)

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

VLAD

Because you can't have them.

Mehmed raises a curious eyebrow...

VLAD (CONT'D)

You can have me instead. I'll go with you to Europe. I'll fight as your servant.

(beat)

Just leave my people be.

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

MEHMED

Those kings would tremble if they knew.

(turns to Dimitru)

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

Vlad goes rigid.

MEHMED (CONT'D)

My father sent young Vlad to serve his Vizier in Greece. Unruly Greece.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MEHMED (CONT'D)

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

Mehmed watches Vlad squirm at the telling of the tale.

MEHMED (CONT'D)

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

(his favorite part)

Only young Vlad believed this
punishment alone would solve
nothing. So he impaled the Vizier
as well. He sent word to all the
villages: you have had your blood
for blood. Now bow to the Sultan
and live in peace. And they did.

(after a beat, to Dimitru)

Kaziglu Bey. It means "Lord
Impaler."

Dimitru is thunderstruck. Cazan knew.

MEHMED (CONT'D)

(to Vlad)

I was impressed.

Vlad glares at Mehmed, ashamed.

VLAD

They were women and children.

MEHMED

You found a way to do what we could
not.

VLAD

(impatient)

Then accept my offer.

MEHMED

Did you think we would not notice a
contingent of my soldiers missing
for days?

ON VLAD. Perplexed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VLAD

What? Where did this happen?

Mehmed points at a map of Transylvania: Broken-Tooth.

MEHMED

At the site of one of our new
aviaries.

VLAD

(rising apprehension)

I don't know anything about this.

MEHMED

There is no one else in this
country who would dare spite me.

VLAD

I didn't kill them.

MEHMED

I want your son.

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

MEHMED (CONT'D)

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

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

MEHMED (CONT'D)

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

(leaning forward)

But now I am Sultan. And I can
never trust Kaziglu Bey.

VLAD

(in Turkish)

Please.

Mehmed ignores him. Gestures to GENERAL ISMAIL. Young, with
a cruel mouth and dead eyes.

MEHMED

You will stay on your throne...
But General Ismail will remain. To
see the Sultan's wishes fulfilled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Vlad stands to leave, legs weak.

MEHMED (CONT'D)
What is one son? If you are virile
enough, you will make more.

INT. STABLE - GIURGIU FORTRESS - DAY

Vlad urgently saddles his horse. Dimitru tries to stop him.

VLAD
I need to find who killed those
soldiers.

DIMITRU
Don't climb Broken-Tooth. Only a
lunatic would go up there.

VLAD
Well no one told the Turks.

Vlad GALLOPS away.

EXT. BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

Vlad RIDES HARD out of the forest. Broken-Tooth looms...

Vlad finds a contingent of TURKISH SOLDIERS at the bridge,
transporting crates of hatchling PIGEONS up to the aviary.

As Vlad dismounts, the Turks bristle, hands on weapons...

An ENORMOUS TURKISH WARRIOR towers over Vlad. A wall of
muscle, he parts his armor to give Vlad a free shot.

ENORMOUS TURK
*Prince Vlad. I'll make it easier
for you... Or were the others
stabbed in the back?*

Vlad ignores the taunts and WALKS PAST, driven...

EXT. AVIARY - BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

Vlad hikes up the TRAIL to an unfinished WOODEN AVIARY,
standing half-built... The Turks follow...

There are broken TURKISH WEAPONS scattered everywhere.
Shreds of armor...

ENORMOUS TURK
Where are the bodies?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad shields his eyes from the sun. CARRION BIRDS circle the jagged peak...

VLAD

Up there.

A cold wind chills Vlad... The Turks look up in fright as

The blood-tinted MIST ROLLS IN... Quickly thick as FOG.

Vlad hears SCREAMS. Something is tearing into the Turks.

Vlad wheels around, braced for an attack. But he can't see past the tip of his sword... Vlad retreats

INSIDE THE UNFINISHED AVIARY

A dead end. Little more than four loosely-slatted walls.

The Enormous Turk RUNS IN behind Vlad... Vlad SLAMS SHUT the rough-hewn door.

A HAND darts THROUGH A GAP in the wall and GRABS Vlad -- Vlad cocks his sword to cut off the hand -- then stops:

It's the hand of a TURKISH OFFICER. Crazy with fear.

TURKISH OFFICER'S VOICE

It will not die...

The Turk's arm is YANKED BACK through the wall. He's gone.

Vlad hears Turkish CRIES cut short one by one... until all is quiet save for the frightened CHIRPING of the hatchlings...

They hear FOOTSTEPS outside the Aviary... Circling... Vlad keeps his nerve, but the Enormous Turk is trembling...

Then, POUNDING on the door. It swings OPEN --

Vlad raises his blade, prepared to kill whatever thing is trying to get in --

It is no monster, but the Turkish Officer who wavers in the doorway.

ENORMOUS TURK

Come in quickly.

VLAD

(sensing something wrong)

Wait --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Turkish Officer falls forward, DEAD. Behind him stands a SILHOUETTED FIGURE. Its EYES glow red, like hot angry coals.

All at once the Figure IS GONE. Beyond the open doorway, Vlad sees only hellish murk...

The Enormous Turk points behind Vlad in alarm. Vlad spins --

Vlad sees RED EYES. It's inside. A BLUR of movement -- then BLACKNESS.

INT. ROMAN TEMPLE - DAY

Vlad OPENS HIS EYES...

Vlad is UPSIDE DOWN, hanging from the ceiling by a chain around his ankles. Like meat hung to drain. Below him, the floor is cut into TROUGHS painted with centuries of blood.

Vlad struggles but his arms are bound...

He sees Turkish Soldiers hanging from the ceiling beside him. Most are STILL ALIVE and also fighting without success.

Vlad tries to keep his head, think...

Dusty SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT slice down from skylights... Vlad can make out dozens of MARBLE COFFINS lining the walls...

...and STATUES. Every statue is of the same person, the beatific face of a youthful Roman man. A THRONE sits at the foot of a GIGANTIC VERSION of this same statue.

Someone lazily WALKS amongst the hanging, struggling bodies.

A FIGURE IN A GOLDEN MASK

Half nude, clad in robes. Body young and lithe... but his skin is white as the belly of a fish. His mask bears the same frozen face as the statues.

The Masked Roman pauses before a hanging UNCONSCIOUS TURK.

THE MASKED ROMAN

Wake up.

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

THE MASKED ROMAN (CONT'D)

Better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Masked Roman SLICES the Turk's throat with a sharp FINGERNAIL. The BLOOD drains into the trough system... Flows beneath Vlad to be collected in a VAT.

Vlad's guts go cold. The Turks panic, the effort swaying them on their chains...

The Masked Roman MOVES DOWN THE ROW, slices the next throat... heading toward Vlad...

VLAD
I'm prince of this land.

The Masked Roman doesn't even look up.

THE MASKED ROMAN
What land is that?

VLAD
Here, to the banks of the Danube.

THE MASKED ROMAN
Oh. Is that all?

The Masked Roman slices the next throat down the line...

VLAD
These soldiers are my enemies.

THE MASKED ROMAN
(chuckles)
Ah. No, they will not bother you again.

The Masked Roman slices another throat, moving closer...

Vlad's eyes land on the INSCRIPTION carved in the statues:

VLAD
"Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus."
Impossible...

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

VLAD (CONT'D)
(to himself)
You were known for your vanity...

THE MASKED ROMAN
(eyes narrowing)
I was famed for my beauty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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

THE MASKED ROMAN (CONT'D)
You think you know me, little prince?

VLAD
You are the Emperor known as Caligula.

For this is the Masked Roman's true name.

CALIGULA
(intrigued)
How am I remembered?

Vlad hesitates before answering...

VLAD
As the greatest of the Caesars.

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

Vlad had better think fast... looks up at the big statue...

VLAD
But you are an Emperor no longer. Now you are a god with powers that rival Jove himself.

Caligula proudly sets his shoulders.

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

Caligula releases Vlad. Vlad tumbles to the ground... rubs his hands to restore circulation...

Caligula reclines on his throne, in a pool of sunlight. Bathing in its warmth like a lizard.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)
Perhaps I will keep you. You could bask in my glory for eternity.

The idea makes Vlad shudder. He bows low.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VLAD

Merciful god, my ancestors are your
ancestors. Let me go.

Caligula gestures to a bejeweled GOBLET by the blood vat.

CALIGULA

Fill my cup. Quickly, while it's
still warm.

Vlad swallows his revulsion. Scoops the goblet in the vat of
blood. Hands it to Caligula, who explains:

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

You see, little Prince, we only
drink the blood of the living.

Caligula REMOVES HIS MASK and DRINKS. Blood stains his chin.

Vlad sees CALIGULA'S FACE. It is terrifying. Corrupted. No
longer human. He is "Ekimmu." Long FANGS jut from his jaw.

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

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

I repulse you.

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

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

(to the statue)

Stop laughing!

Caligula pulverizes his marble face with his BARE FIST.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

(to Vlad)

You're like the rest of them.

Caligula SWATS Vlad across the room. Vlad rolls to his knee,
clutching broken ribs. Caligula comes at him...

VLAD

You were always insane.

Vlad draws his sword and SLASHES Caligula's chest --

Caligula merely grins. Vlad watches in amazement as
Caligula's wound HEALS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

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

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

CALIGULA

You dare bring silver into my
temple?

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

Caligula hurls Vlad into a statue. Vlad's skull HITS hard.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

Your god will now accept your
tribute.

Caligula points a sharp finger under Vlad's chin... But Vlad has BLACKED OUT. Caligula slaps his cheek.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

No... Come back.

Caligula shakes Vlad's limp body to no avail.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

There is no pleasure in this.

Caligula drops the unconscious Vlad on the floor, disgusted.

Caligula turns to the Enormous Turk, squirming on his chain:

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

Entertain me.

INT. ROMAN TEMPLE - LATER

SCREAMS draw Vlad BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS...

Vlad glimpses Caligula at the far end of the temple. The mad emperor hunches over the now-freed Enormous Turk... toying with him like a cat with a broken-winged bird...

Careful to not make a sound, Vlad crawls to the door...

EXT. ROMAN TEMPLE - BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

Vlad exits the ancient TEMPLE. He sees he's in the shallow CRATER ringed by the mountain's "broken teeth." A carpet of bones under his feet...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad RUNS flat-out DOWN THE MOUNTAIN. He doesn't look back.

EXT. DANUBE PLAIN - LATER

Vlad waits. A wreck. His mind churning...

Mirena and Ingeras ARRIVE by carriage, with Cazan.

Vlad's injuries stop her short. Mirena reads his heartbroken expression. She knows something is terribly wrong...

MIRENA

What happened? Why did you bring
us here?

Vlad watches his son asleep in her arms... and feels gutted.

A TURKISH FLAG can be seen, preceding Hamza Bey and six
BRAWNY TURKISH SOLDIERS. Mirena has her unthinkable answer.

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

CAZAN

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

Hamza Bey steps forward, presenting the scroll.

HAMZA BEY

*Sign the terms. And we will be on
our way.*

Vlad numbly agrees. Cuts his finger. Imprints the scroll.

Hamza Bey gestures for Ingeras... Mirena backs away.

MIRENA

(anguished)

You promised this wouldn't happen.

Vlad pries Ingeras from his wife's arms. He can't look her
in the eye. Can't let himself think about what he's doing...

MIRENA (CONT'D)

He's our son.

Vlad forces himself to ignore her tears. Carries his son
toward the Turks...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ingeras WAKES. His tiny hand grips Vlad's. Perfect compared to Vlad's rough and battle-tested palm. Ingeras looks up at his father, knowing nothing but love...

Vlad HALTS. Looks at his son. He can't take a step further.

The Turks wait...

HAMZA BEY

Do not play games.

Vlad's face hardens as his path becomes clear.

VLAD

(to Ingeras)

No matter what I become, I'll still love you.

Vlad turns and gives Ingeras back to Mirena.

CAZAN

(grabbing Vlad)

Don't.

Vlad pulls away from Cazan... In one blinding motion, Vlad STEALS the sword from the scabbard of one of the Turks --

And JAMS it through Hamza Bey's heart.

Vlad CUTS DOWN two more Turks before their swords are drawn. The other FOUR arm themselves... It does them no good.

Vlad kills them with a berserker fury, indifferent to the sprays of blood that sting his eyes...

The last Turk begs for mercy.

TURKISH SOLDIER

Please don't --

Vlad drives his blade through the man's pleading throat.

When it is over, the Turks of the delegation lie butchered. Vlad stands bathed in their blood, chest heaving...

VLAD

It's not a child's place to save his country. It's the responsibility of men.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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

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

Vlad unclasps the SILVER CHAIN from Mirena's neck. The crucifix falls. Vlad balls the silver chain in his fist...

Vlad kisses Mirena roughly, desperately. Hoping it will not be their last.

VLAD
Get to the castle. The Turks will
be marching soon.

EXT. ROMAN TEMPLE - BROKEN-TOOTH MOUNTAIN - DAY

Alone, Vlad picks his way down the hidden crater's lip... At the TEMPLE DOORS, Vlad musters himself... and ENTERS.

INT. ROMAN TEMPLE - DAY

Caligula sits on his throne, arguing with his broken statue.

CALIGULA
Only ten thousand slaves to move my
grave? Ten thousand slaves to
build a new Rome? I should have
had a hundred thousand. A million.

Caligula's mystified to see Vlad has come back.

VLAD
How about a kiss?

In a blur, Caligula SLASHES Vlad's GUT open with his nails.

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

But Caligula should not have gotten so close...

Vlad throws the silver chain over Caligula's head.

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

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD

How do I get your power?

Vlad puts a foot between Caligula's shoulder blades and PULLS, the silver slowly SLICING through Caligula's throat...

Larynx severed, Caligula speaks with a gurgling rasp:

CALIGULA

You are not worthy to serve me.

VLAD

Serve you?

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

CALIGULA

Stop... The power is in my blood.
If you drink it you will be like
me.

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

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

VLAD

I'll never be like you.

Vlad cups Caligula's BLOOD in his hands and DRINKS... Handful after handful. Noxious blood courses through him...

Vlad looks down at his SLASHED GUT and lets out a ragged breath. It's a terrible wound. It will kill him soon.

Vlad finds his SIGNET RING on the floor. Puts it on.

The sound of STONE SCRAPING STONE... The coffins OPEN...

THE UN-DEAD "EKIMMU"

Rise. Once Roman soldiers, senators and their wives. Now Caligula's brood. Blood-tinted eyes shake off slumber...

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

Too many to fight, Vlad backs up as they surround him...

The brood KNEELS. Worshipping him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD (CONT'D)
I'm not your god.

An UN-DEAD ROMAN CENTURION picks up Caligula's head by the hair and tosses it out of the temple like trash.

Vlad can't fend them off as they lift him up... and LAY HIM IN a marble COFFIN.

VLAD (CONT'D)
No --

Vlad reaches up. The closing lid HITS HIS FINGERS, breaking them. But Vlad's crushed hand jams the coffin OPEN a CRACK.

EXT. ROMAN TEMPLE - DAY

A procession of Un-Dead carries the coffin outside. They dig a GRAVE in the earth with their bare hands... The Ekimmu BURY THE COFFIN and WITHDRAW to their own coffins to wait...

VLAD INSIDE THE COFFIN

Lays in darkness. Lifeblood pouring out.

VLAD
Not yet.

Vlad heaves back the lid enough for him to dig his way
OUTSIDE

Vlad falls to all fours. The end coming fast.

Vlad's silver ring starts to BURN HIS FINGER... Unwilling to give it up, Vlad hangs the ring around his neck by a leather cord. His tunic provides some protection from its touch.

CALIGULA'S HEAD
Why do you bother?

Caligula's Head lies discarded nearby. Eyes half-lidded. Mouth twitching in a half-smirk...

VLAD
I'm not dead yet.

CALIGULA'S HEAD
Soon. And they will bury you once more. Oh, you will rise, with all the power you so covet...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALIGULA'S HEAD (cont'd)
(cackling)
But you will never leave.

VLAD
Be quiet.

CALIGULA'S HEAD
Did you not wonder why I remained
here? On this wretched mountain
not fit for plebes?

ON VLAD, a sinking feeling Caligula is telling the truth...

CALIGULA'S HEAD (CONT'D)
You see, little Prince, nothing can
escape its grave. Not even us. We
cannot stray from the dirt we are
buried in. For what is dirt, but
the rotted bones of the dead?

Vlad closes his eyes in despair... Lying at the top of this
hellish peak with mere moments to live...

And then it comes to him. Vlad digs in his fingers and
defiantly drags himself up the crater's LIP...

CALIGULA'S HEAD (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

VLAD
When I was a young, I survived a
shipwreck on the Black Sea. The
ones who drowned... they had no
grave at all.

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

VLAD (CONT'D)
I won't be buried in earth. I
won't even die on it.

Caligula's Head realizes what Vlad is doing. He SCREECHES a
warning alarm... The Un-Dead brood SPEED from the temple --

Vlad lets himself FALL off the edge of the mountain.

The Ekimmu lunge to grab Vlad -- too late.

Vlad tumbles through space... HITS the water. Vlad's body
is SWEPT ALONG by the river...

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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

ANGLE BENEATH VLAD, looking up from underwater. Vlad floats face down. The light in his eyes goes out. He is dead.

EXT. SCORCHED EARTH - NIGHT

Like a dream, WE ARE FLYING THROUGH a black sky. Storm clouds have eaten the sun. Lightning splits the horizon...

BELOW US, the world is an apocalyptic wasteland. Naked forests. Burned earth. Cities devoid of life.

WE FLY TOWARD snow-capped mountains... The slopes rippling with movement, like a carcass alive with ants...

It is a vast LEGION OF THE DEAD... Their flesh, white as bone. Their eyes, red as hell.

All BOW to the ONE WHO RULES THEM: a faceless figure in black, standing before a ruined MONASTERY.

A peal of thunder. It begins to rain. Not water...

It rains BLOOD.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

BROTHER LUCIAN

Wakes trembling from this vision of Armageddon. A monk wearing a simple cossack. 60s, body bent under the weight of his knowledge, starved in the quest for it.

Brother Lucian presses his forehead to the dirt floor of his tiny austere cave. Prays with fervor.

BROTHER LUCIAN
Father in heaven, hear the prayer
of your servant Lucian. Let these
visions not come to pass.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

Brother Lucian trudges through a SNOWY PASS, high in the Carpathian Mountains, toward

COZIA MONASTERY, a stone edifice nestled between high cliffs. Firelight glows behind its walls, promising warmth within.

It is the same monastery from Brother Lucian's vision.

INT. MONASTERY DINING HALL - NIGHT

Brother Lucian eats ravenously, regaining strength. Other MONKS watch him in awe, respectfully keeping their distance.

FAT BROTHER JAKOB sits across from his friend Lucian.

FAT BROTHER JAKOB
What did you see, Lucian?

Brother Lucian doesn't stop eating.

BROTHER LUCIAN
(matter-of-fact)
The end of the world.

Brother Jakob crosses himself. The others MURMUR nervously.

BROTHER LUCIAN (CONT'D)
The Antichrist gathers strength.
We must prepare to meet him.

FAT BROTHER JAKOB
Where will we find him?

BROTHER LUCIAN
He will come to us.

EXT. GIURGIU FORTRESS - DAY

General Ismail appraises the lined-up corpses of Hamza Bey and his escort. Eating a handful of nuts. Almost pleased...

GENERAL ISMAIL
(to his Captains)
*We should thank Kaziglu Bey. If we
are to be stuck in this dung heap,
at least it will not be dull.*

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Peasants working the fields stop at the sound of DRUMS...

ISMAIL'S ARMY grinds toward them. Thousands on foot and horseback...

At the head march the AZABS: Turkish Lancers in green and red. The SIPAHIS protect the flanks: Turkish Horseman wearing high white turbans, astride swift Arabian stallions.

Peasants drops their scythes and run for their homes...

EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - DAY

Screams draw out the VILLAGE ELDER. A man who has weathered many peaceful winters, he should never have had to see this:

Turks swarm his village. Boys chosen to be Janissaries are dragged from wailing mothers... Torches are set to homes...

General Ismail watches from astride his horse...

One BRAVE FARMER fights back, but is easily disarmed. The Turks are about to execute him --

GENERAL ISMAIL

No. Not with swords.

EXT. FOREST STREAM - DAY

Vlad's corpse is face down in the stream, caught on rocks. The corpse STIRS, rolls over...

Vlad bares newly grown FANGS in a terrifying yawn, his jaw the first thing to be thawed from death. Vlad's eyes snap open. Blood red, inhuman. Disoriented...

VLAD'S P.O.V. The world looks different. Sharper.

Thirsty, Vlad drinks from the stream... but spits out the water as if it were poison.

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

Vlad triumphantly gazes at distant Broken-Tooth Mountain:

VLAD

I'm free.

Vlad feels his chest burn: the SILVER RING hanging from the cord around his neck. It's painfully hot to the touch...

Vlad notices the Village Elder behind him. Vlad hides his face under the hood of his cloak...

VLAD (CONT'D)

Don't be afraid.

VILLAGE ELDER

(oddly unconcerned)

What is there to be afraid of?

Vlad hears a rhythmic POUNDING...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD

The Turks are close.

VILLAGE ELDER

They've been in the village for hours.

VLAD

I can hear their drums.

VILLAGE ELDER

What drums?

EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - DAY

Vlad RUNS past smoldering homes, the air choked with smoke... The ever-present DRUMMING in his ears...

HUNDREDS OF PEASANTS hang like scarecrows, each IMPALED on tall, sharp poles pierced through their gut. Women and children, too. Death did not come quickly.

Vlad is brought to his knees by the sight.

VLAD

Forgive me.

The Village Elder stares at Vlad accusingly... The horizon is ON FIRE. The Turks are sweeping across the land, multiplying this atrocity.

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

Vlad turns confused to the "Village Elder" standing behind him, passes his hand STRAIGHT THROUGH the man. A GHOST.

VLAD (CONT'D)

You're dead.

VILLAGE ELDER

So are you.

(beat)

Feast on them, devil.

The Ghost of the Village Elder VANISHES into the air.

Vlad hears the DRUMMING getting louder...

A GROUP OF TURKISH SOLDIERS finds Vlad, whose face remains CONCEALED under his hood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BURLY TURK
We missed one.

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

The Turks ENCIRCLE VLAD... One stalks toward him, LAUGHING, a long SHARPENED POLE in hand...

Vlad picks up a sword from the ground...

LAUGHING TURK
At least this one isn't begging.

Vlad SLICES THROUGH the Laughing Turk. The Turks gird themselves: this is no farmer...

Vlad fixates on the blood rolling down his sword...

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

VLAD
(to his sword)
I won't drink blood. But you can.

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

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

Vlad flips back his hood. The Turks gasp at Vlad's fanged face and RUN.

A TURKISH CAPTAIN IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE

Hears the commotion. The Captain commands a detachment of Ismail's Army, a HUNDRED men...

Now he sees them SCATTER like children... and through fire and smoke, a nightmarish vision of

VLAD

Slashing through Turks with satisfaction. As blood is shed, Vlad's savagery mounts. Its scent goading him into a frenzy.

A squad of terrified AZABS close in on Vlad with their spears... Vlad realizes a moment too late that the spears are corralling him toward the village WELL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vlad is pushed backward, along with an UNLUCKY AZAB
INTO THE WELL

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

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

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

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

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

IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE

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

TURKISH CAPTAIN
Acings. Ready.

ACINGS (Turkish Archers) fret arrows, take aim at the well...

Vlad sends the millstone crashing as he EMERGES.

TURKISH CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Shoot him. Shoot him.

The Turkish Archers rain ARROWS down on Vlad.

Vlad rips the arrows from his body, unharmed. Stalks toward the quaking Turkish Captain... Seizes him by the throat --

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

TURKISH CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
A demon...

Vlad grips his ring. Resists the thirst.

VLAD
No. I'm the Prince.

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

EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - LATER

All the Turks lie dead. Vlad can't take his eyes off the BLOOD. Dripping from his sword... Pooling under the dead...

Vlad snaps himself out of it, when he sees an

OLD WOMAN

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

OLD WOMAN

Don't hurt me, devil.

VLAD

I'm not a devil.

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

OLD WOMAN

(slyly, off his touch)

And she is not a ghost.

VLAD

(suspicious)

Who are you?

The Old Woman looks at Vlad with kindly eyes.

OLD WOMAN

She has come to help.

VLAD

Unless you plan to carry me to my castle, you can't help.

Vlad moves to corral a wandering HORSE...

OLD WOMAN

He is a foul thing. A drinker of blood.

This stops Vlad. She knows what he has become.

VLAD

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

The Old Woman points to Vlad's silver ring around his neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD WOMAN

He resists. For now.

(beat)

But he has a little berry. Ingeras
he calls it. It is a tasty name.

Vlad grips his silver ring as she pries at his greatest fear.

VLAD

I would never hurt him.

But Vlad does not sound convinced.

OLD WOMAN

She can end his thirst.

VLAD

(after a beat)

What do I have to do?

OLD WOMAN

He makes a wish and it will come to
pass.

VLAD

As simple as that?

OLD WOMAN

A wish is not a simple thing.

VLAD

I wish... I no longer desired
blood.

Vlad hears an odd SCRATCHING SOUND... A strange HUT now
stands behind him. Yellow windows stare like eyes. Inside,
flames under a bubbling CAULDRON.

The Old Woman ENTERS... but Vlad JERKS TO A HALT at the hut's
door. An invisible barrier stopped him at the threshold.

OLD WOMAN

(tsking)

The thing he has become cannot
enter uninvited.

The Old Woman selects a log from her firewood. Whittles it
to a SHARP STAKE. Quick as a snake's tongue, the Old Woman
PRICKS Vlad's finger with the stake's POINT.

MUMBLING, the Old Woman uses the stake to stir the brew...
Vlad's BLOOD mingling with other, unknowable ingredients...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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

VLAD
I'm still thirsty.

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

Vlad grabs it just in time. But the point pokes Vlad's heart. Just the hint of it hurts Vlad to the core.

OLD WOMAN
He must die!

Vlad grapples with the Old Woman, who is SUPERNATURALLY STRONG. She gnashes her teeth in anger -- TEETH made of sharp IRON. Her eyes are no longer kind, but cruel.

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

VLAD
What have you done to me?

OLD WOMAN
As he wished. If his heart is pierced with wood, his thirst will end.

VLAD
I didn't ask to be killed.

OLD WOMAN
His thirst can end no other way.

VLAD
I don't believe you.

The Old Woman dashes FOR HER HUT -- Before she's halfway in, Vlad GRABS her leg. Flailing, she latches onto her cauldron. Vlad yanks her OUTSIDE, spilling her cauldron out the door...

OLD WOMAN
He will bring death to all things.
Even she will meet her end.

VLAD
Stop lying to me.

OLD WOMAN
She has seen it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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

In the PUDDLE from the spilled cauldron, Vlad sees a FUTURE IMAGE of himself take shape:

This Vlad hunches on his throne, alone, head in his hands. Crying out in torment and regret. Fangs so bloodstained they look rusted. His castle walls have crumbled over time to reveal a barren earth, littered with the bones of the dead.

Vlad stomps his boot in the puddle, dispelling the vision.

VLAD

I'd jam this stake through my own heart before I'd let that happen.

OLD WOMAN

Ha. One sweet taste of blood will set his fate in stone.

(hissing)

Where she failed another must succeed. They need only sharp wood and a path to his wicked heart.

But Vlad catches on her words...

VLAD

So my fate's not written yet?

OLD WOMAN

(admitting)

Until he drinks the blood of men, he may yet undo what he has done.

In the puddle, Vlad sees a DIFFERENT IMAGE of his future:

This Vlad is human, his beard flecked gray. His arms lovingly draped around a similarly older and untroubled Mirena. They proudly watch INGERAS, now 12, enthusiastically put a stallion through its paces in the castle courtyard.

VLAD

I could be the man I was?

OLD WOMAN

If he would defeat the one who made him so.

VLAD

I already did.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OLD WOMAN

(scoffs)

The Roman did not make him. He
stole from his veins.

VLAD

Then who?

OLD WOMAN

His true master will find him.

Vlad sees a dirty CAGE strewn with tiny bones in her hut.

VLAD

You eat children...

Vlad realizes who this Old Woman is.

VLAD (CONT'D)

My nursemaid told me tales of you.
A witch named Baba Yaga, who grants
three wishes to any man who asks.

(plunging ahead)

You owe me two more.

BABA YAGA

No, no, no. Wishes are for
punishing the weakness of men.

VLAD

(unmoved)

I wish I could bend the will of my
enemies.

She gnashes her teeth and pulls her hair. Despairing at what
she has inadvertently made possible.

BABA YAGA

She is a stupid old crone.

(begging)

She must not give his cursed blood
strength it should not have.

VLAD

Then you shouldn't have started
this.

CLOSE ON A SKULL

Flames dance in the eye sockets from a lighted CANDLE inside.
Baba Yaga begrudgingly holds out the skull to Vlad...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BABA YAGA

He looks into its eyes. He takes
the fire for his own.

Vlad stares into the skull sockets... As Vlad concentrates,
the flames are EXTINGUISHED... then re-lit in his eyes.

VLAD

Now I wish I had my face back.

CLOSE ON A HANDFUL OF POWDER

In Baba Yaga's gnarled palm. She BLOWS THE POWDER at Vlad.

BABA YAGA

He shines. He speaks music...

Instantly, Vlad TRANSFORMS: fangs and red eyes replaced by
the handsome face he was born with...

BABA YAGA (CONT'D)

He hides the plague he brings.

Vlad looks at his rosy HANDS. A flawless illusion.

But the horse REARS, now terrified of Vlad... Vlad sees
WILDFLOWERS wilting at his feet...

VLAD

More tricks?

BABA YAGA

He may now fool men... but Nature
is not deceived. She sees the
truth and shuns him in all her
guises.

Baba Yaga steps into her hut as it MOVES AWAY. We see the
source of the odd SCRATCHING SOUND: the hut rides on hundreds
of chicken feet, like the tiny legs of a millipede.

BABA YAGA (CONT'D)

Maybe he will not upset the balance
of things so easily.

Baba Yaga's hut slips into the woods and is gone.

Vlad can hear the spooked horse's HEART... The thirst still
gnawing at his bones, Vlad gently approaches the animal...

VLAD

Shh... Easy...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Vlad WRESTLES the horse to the ground. BITES its jugular and greedily drinks its blood. Bringing momentary relief...

...yet Vlad looks at the dead horse, queasy.

VLAD (CONT'D)
It's just horse blood.
(wipes his mouth)
This can still be undone.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - NIGHT

Vlad runs through the forest, trying to reach Tirgoviste. Ahead, the glow of the CITY ON FIRE.

Vlad hears HOWLING... A WOLF PACK paces him from a distance.

Overhead, silent WHOOSHES... BATS fly past Vlad's ears, only to perch on branches ahead and wait for him to catch up...

VLAD
It seems not all nature opposes me.

A WHITE WOLF trots up to Vlad, a half-eaten ewe in its jaws.

Something odd about this wolf. It has nearly human eyes...

VLAD (CONT'D)
You smell like a man...

The White Wolf drops the sheep as an offering to Vlad.

Something brushes against Vlad's feet: RATS, undulating and squealing. Vlad steps back, disgusted.

The SOUND OF AN EXPLOSION

Shakes the earth, sends the menagerie scattering in all directions... Vlad's never heard anything like it.

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

The courtyard is a scene of panic, swelled with PEASANTS seeking sanctuary... There is now a GAPING HOLE in the wall.

Dimitru and Simion pick their way along SHATTERED RAMPARTS, choked with dust, to see the army arrayed against them:

Tirgoviste is BURNING. The castle under siege. General Ismail's Acings unload volleys of fire-tipped arrows...

A GIANT CANNON smokes. Aimed by teams of CANNONEERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIMITRU

I never imagined cannons could be
that big.

SIMION "THE WISE"

Probably what the poor bastards in
Constantinople thought.

The CHIEF CANNONEER steps away from the red-hot barrel.
Inverts a large HOURGLASS. Eight hours to cool...

But there are TWO MORE CANNONS...

MIRENA IN THE COURTYARD

Sings to Ingeras to calm him among the chaotic throng of
refugees. Nearby, Cazan anxiously kneads his cane.

The second CANNONBALL HITS. Falling debris CRUSHES Peasants.

EXT. CITY OF TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

General Ismail yawns as the third giant cannon is aimed at
the CASTLE GATE. The cannon FIRES --

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

SMOKE clears... the castle gate is now CRACKED on its hinges.

Simion glares at the baby in Mirena's arms:

SIMION "THE WISE"

We'll all die now. For this.

DIMITRU

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

SIMION "THE WISE"

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

Mirena feels everyone's eyes on her... She knows she has to
do something...

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NEAR CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

Mirena walks alone from the castle bearing a flag of parley.

General Ismail, surrounded by Officers, eats at a well-set
table under the eave of the cathedral, site of their aviary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENERAL ISMAIL
The Prince sends his woman?

MIRENA
What are your terms for surrender?

General Ismail turns to his officers, *SAYS SOMETHING IN TURKISH* that makes them laugh and eye Mirena up and down. Instinctively, she draws her arms across her chest.

GENERAL ISMAIL
There are no terms. We will kill
every man and woman inside.

Mirena exhales as if punched. General Ismail points to an HOURGLASS marking time until the cannons can fire again...

GENERAL ISMAIL (CONT'D)
You have a few hours left. If you
want you could spend them with us.

Humiliated, Mirena treads heavily back to the castle.

We RISE UP to the steeple...

Vlad crouches, cloaked in darkness. His red eyes radiating fury.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

AT THE PERIMETER OF THE TURKISH RANKS

A SQUAD OF AZABS on patrol. Unnerved by the distant HOWL of wolves...

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

AZAB COMMANDER
It is the symbol of their Prince.

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

AT THE TENTS OF THE INFANTRY

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

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

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

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

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

IN AN OFFICER'S TENT

TURKISH OFFICERS fearfully whisper amongst themselves...

They notice a HOODED SOLDIER hovering outside the entrance. The Hooded Soldier speaks to them *in Turkish*:

VLAD'S VOICE
*I bring news from the watch. May I
enter?*

The Turkish Officers WAVE IN the Hooded Soldier...

OUTSIDE THE OFFICER'S TENT

A SIPAHI CAPTAIN guides his HORSE past... The horse bucks, spooked. The Sipahi feels a chill, looks INSIDE THE TENT:

Vlad pulls his KNIFE from an Officer, the rest dead at his feet.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NEAR CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

General Ismail angrily berates a frightened SUBORDINATE...

GENERAL ISMAIL
Find who is doing this.

The Subordinate scurries off, leaving General Ismail alone.

VLAD
Ismail.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad's EYES shimmer with MESMERIZING fire. Wielding the power to command his enemies granted by Baba Yaga's magic...

Ismail's pupils cloud as Vlad's will carves into his brain:

VLAD (CONT'D)

I have some new orders for you.

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - DAWN

Dawn comes to the crowded courtyard. Impending death weighs on everyone. Some pray. Some weep. Some are angry.

Dimitru's face is creased with anguish...

DIMITRU

God will punish the Sultan for this.

Women stoically tend to the injured... Mirena wets a WOUNDED MAN'S lips with WINE. He gazes adoringly up at her.

MIRENA

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

An OLD GRANDMOTHER rocks Ingeras. Smiles sadly at Mirena.

OLD GRANDMOTHER

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

Dogs pull at their chains, BARKING wildly... A hush falls. Outside the broken gate, someone approaches...

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

It's Vlad.

He peels back his hood to reveal HIS FACE, transformed by Baba Yaga's magic back to his recognizable, handsome self.

People press toward their prince as if he alone might deliver them from evil... Vlad anxiously searches out his wife...

Mirena throws herself into his arms. Vlad hugs her and Ingeras and doesn't let go.

VLAD

I lost your necklace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIRENA

The chain wasn't the important
part...

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

MIRENA (CONT'D)

I prayed for a miracle.

VLAD

I won't leave you again.

Vlad gathers himself before thousands of expectant eyes:

VLAD (CONT'D)

(addressing the people)

They wanted my son. A good prince
would have given him up. A good
prince would have kept the peace.

(catches Cazan's eye)

I couldn't. I'm sorry I failed
you.

The crowd is silent. Despair hangs heavy as a shroud.

VLAD (CONT'D)

There are a lot of Turks out there.
But there's one thing that can beat
them... You.

The people BUZZ, unsure...

VLAD (CONT'D)

Together you're stronger than all
of them. Your heart is one heart.
Your hands are one hand...

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

VLAD (CONT'D)

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

The crowd ROARS. Vlad raps Dimitru on the chest:

VLAD (CONT'D)

We have an army.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE DRACULA - DAWN

Ranks of Turks surround the castle, denying escape... Yet as we PAN across their faces, we see Vlad's night of terror has taken its toll.

General Ismail walks to the cannons with a distracted air...

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - DAWN

Vlad oversees as WEAPONS are distributed to eager Peasants...

DIMITRU

So... where have you been?

Vlad nods mischievously toward the Turkish ranks.

VLAD

Just watch.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE DRACULA - DAWN

General Ismail watches the sand in the hourglass finally run out. Eyes glassy. His mind is not his own.

Without warning Ismail HACKS at the WINCH ROPES with Vlad's knife -- The cannon barrel DROPS, burying itself in the dirt.

CHIEF CANNONEER

General, no...

Ismail KILLS the Chief Cannoneer without thinking. Nothing will interfere with his task. He LIGHTS THE FUSE and runs --

The cannon FIRES point blank into the earth and BLOWS UP. SHRAPNEL rips men apart. RUPTURES the barrels of the two cannons on either side...

OUT THE CASTLE GATE

Vlad leads the charge of soldiers -- Peasants, old and young.

Vlad sprints ahead of his men... so the Turks see something the Transylvanians cannot:

Vlad reveals his MONSTER'S FACE to the Turks. They see skin like a ghost, fangs like a demon. Terror spreads.

The Transylvanians hit the Turkish line -- the line BREAKS.

Vlad leads his men deep into the heart of the Turkish camp... Turks run or fall screaming under his sword...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Transylvanians believe they are invincible, so invincible they become... against an opponent whose nerve is shattered.

GENERAL ISMAIL

Trembles, disoriented. He looks up. Vlad stands over him.

VLAD

I have a message for Mehmed.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE DRACULA - LATER

Victory. Smoke from the shattered cannons hangs heavy across a battlefield strewn with dead and dying... The last Turks FLEE into the fields beyond Tirgoviste...

Battle-stained Peasants salute their Prince and CHEER... Vlad notices Cazan appraising him the way he does.

CAZAN

A remarkable victory.

VLAD

It was them.

But Cazan is worried.

CAZAN

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

VLAD

Look. It's me.

(puts an arm around Cazan)

What do you advise me to do?

CAZAN

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

EXT. GRAND COURTYARD - CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

Mirena looks for Vlad among the women embracing brave sons and husbands. The air charged with a tenuous euphoria.

A SIX YEAR-OLD bumps Mirena as he runs past, chased by Mihai (the boy whose father Vlad hired to be Cazan's valet).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIHAI
(bows)
Pardon me, my lady.

MIRENA
(smiles)
So pardoned.

Vlad approaches, sees Mihai trailed by five younger siblings.

VLAD
Where's your father?

MIHAI
(voice catching)
He was fighting with you, but... I
wish I could have been with him.
Instead I'm stuck as a nursemaid.

Vlad doesn't let Mihai see the sadness he feels at the boy's father's death. Instead he leans close, conspiratorially. As if Mihai were his closest confidante...

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

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

MIHAI
What does it mean?

Vlad WHISPERS the translation to Mihai, who LAUGHS at the obscenity. Mirena's heard this particular insult before.

MIRENA
I pity the Sultan's mother...

Vlad watches Mihai run off with his siblings... The cost of war written on Vlad's face.

VLAD
It's only going to get harder.

Mirena slides her arm around his waist.

EXT. MEHMED'S SHIP - DANUBE RIVER - DAY

Mehmed stands on the prow of his ship, celebrated by the spray. Looking west, toward his future...

General Omer hands Mehmed a message.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENERAL OMER
Word from Tirgoviste.

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

MEHMED
My old brother...
(to General Omer)
*This scrap of land must be quickly
secured. I will not let the Danube
freeze before I reach Hungary.*

GENERAL OMER
*Your victory is already written in
the stars.*

MEHMED
I prefer to write it myself.

ANGLE ON THE DANUBE RIVER

A thousand ships weighted with legions SLOWLY TURNS... A
colossus shifting its shadow. Ready to engulf Transylvania.

EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

Vlad, Dimitru, and Simion stand on a precipice, high above
Tirgoviste. High enough to see the distant Danube River...

Mehmed's GREAT ARMY of three hundred thousand has
disembarked, now moving toward them like a stain...

VLAD
(to Mehmed)
You left your cannons behind.

DIMITRU
Thank God...

VLAD
(explaining)
So they won't slow him down. He's
coming fast, faster than I thought.
We have to move quickly.

Watching the coming force, Simion is sick with fear.

SIMION "THE WISE"
Where? Your castle was our
stoutest defense and it couldn't
stand up to a tenth of that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad looks up: a TRAIL zig-zags up snow-capped mountains.

VLAD
We'll go to Cozia Monastery.

SIMION "THE WISE"
To pray?

VLAD
I had Cozia's walls built thick
enough to defend against a siege.
I expanded the caves, stocked them
with enough grain for weeks.
(beat)
The Borgo Pass narrows to a choke
point there. Even against Mehmed's
numbers, we can put up a good
fight.

Dimitru and Simion marvel at the Prince's foresight...

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

VLAD
How pious do you think I am?

EXT. TRAIL - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - SUNSET

A caravan of TWO THOUSAND-PLUS PEASANTS climbs up the trail.

Vlad holds Mirena's hand to guide her up... Carries a
bundled Ingeras in his other arm...

VLAD
(showing Ingeras the view)
Look. Someday this will all be
your problem.

Lame Cazan makes an effort to keep pace with Dimitru.

DIMITRU
I can toss you over my shoulder.

CAZAN
I'm not a sack of turnips.

Vlad looks back at the people he leads... Thousands bonded
together. Helping one another. A people united.

EXT. CAMPSITE - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Tents are hastily erected under a bright FULL MOON.

Vlad warms his hands over a FIRE. He feels unusually cold...

Cazan takes a seat. Rubs his sore legs.

VLAD

I'm sorry. We can't afford to rest more than a couple hours.

CAZAN

I'm fine.

(noticing)

You're practically sitting in the fire.

VLAD

I can't seem to warm up.

CAZAN

That's why people get married.

INT. VLAD'S TENT - NIGHT

Vlad and Mirena kiss as they pull each other's clothes off. Vlad's silver ring is thrown off with everything else...

They fall on a bed of furs in a lover's tangle... Mirena glances at Ingeras, swaddled in a basket...

MIRENA

Shhh... He's sleeping.

VLAD

I'll be quiet. Can you?

Mirena sees something and recoils: a RAT crawling across their clothes... Vlad realizes the thing was drawn to him.

VLAD (CONT'D)

(to the rat)

Get away.

The rat stops for a moment, it seems to think... then scurries away. Mirena finds this odd.

MIRENA

Almost like it listened to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD
(tries to make a joke)
Why shouldn't it? I am the Prince.

Mirena notices the BURN on Vlad's chest. It's where his silver ring usually hangs.

MIRENA
Does that hurt?

VLAD
It's nothing.

Vlad pulls her into a kiss, needing her touch. Trying to smother his worry. Soon they are intertwined in passion...

Vlad hears Mirena's HEARTBEAT. Close... and growing louder.

Vlad abruptly stops.

MIRENA
What is it?

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

This isn't the first time Mirena's experienced one of her husband's dark moods. She begins dressing as well...

VLAD
Where are you going?

MIRENA
To keep an eye on you. When you're like this you'll just stomp around until you get frostbite --

VLAD
Stay the hell away from me.

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

EXT. FOREST - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Vlad LEAVES CAMP, away from the HEARTBEATS of the living. He grips his ring, struggling to control his thirst...

Vlad CLIMBS a ridge into thick pine FOREST...

A WOLF pads from the trees, drawn to Vlad... Vlad BITES its neck, drinks the blood. The animal gives itself willingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The disgust is gone. Vlad's getting used to this...

Then Vlad sees more WOLVES gathering around him...

BACK AT CAMP

Peasants fearfully see the beasts accumulating on the ridge.

DIMITRU

Get everyone together. They'll
target the weak first.

VLAD IN THE FOREST

Surrounded by a TIDE OF WOLVES. They HOWL to salute their
master. Madness growing by the minute...

Wolves peel away to stalk hungrily TOWARD CAMP. The refugees
at the bottom of the ridge an inviting feast...

VLAD

Stop!

The wolves do, looking curiously back at Vlad in unison...

Vlad realizes these dumb beasts obey him. Vlad points to the
edge of a CLIFF and angrily commands them:

VLAD (CONT'D)

Jump.

The wolves obey, LEAPING off the cliff like lemmings. Vlad
watches as they're dashed on the rocks below...

Including the White Wolf with nearly human eyes. The dying
White Wolf dissolves in a smoky blur...

TRANSFORMING into a dying MAN. Naked, dirty, vile. For
Vlad, it's as if reality is melting away...

Vlad CLIMBS DOWN for a closer look... The man has dark,
exotic features: a GYPSY.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Why do you follow me?

The Cursed Gypsy reaches for Vlad with filthy, split nails.

CURSED GYPSY

You will drink the blood of
thousands... We only want to
scavenge the meat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vlad backs away from the Cursed Gypsy's outstretched hand, horrified. Vlad doesn't wait to watch it die.

EXT. FOREST - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - LATER

Dimitru and a dozen soldiers clear the ridge, swords drawn...

All they find is Vlad, sitting alone. Lost in thought.

VLAD

The wolves are gone.

The soldiers head back to camp, the danger passed. Dimitru stays behind, seeing Vlad in this oddly melancholic state...

DIMITRU

You plan to sit up here all night?

VLAD

Remember when we were stuck in that tiny inn outside Bistritza? You, me, and Mirena...

DIMITRU

Was a devil of a blizzard that night.

VLAD

I remember how warm it was inside, with the snow beating at the window panes. Singing all night, drunk on plum brandy...

Vlad trails off... Dimitru holds out a hand. Vlad takes it so Dimitru can pull him to his feet.

VLAD (CONT'D)

(firmly)

We'll go back there someday soon.

EXT. FIELDS OUTSIDE TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Mehmed leads his Great Army. Endless spears MARCHING to DRUMBEAT...

Cresting a rise, Mehmed sights the remnants of GENERAL ISMAIL'S ARMY wandering the fields outside Tirgoviste...

They pass a TERRORIZED TURK who sits staring at the dirt...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TERRORIZED TURK

(rambling)

*He has the devil's face... He has
the devil's face and cannot die...*

Mehmed and General Omer share a look of alarm...

MEHMED

The men should not see this.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE DRACULA - DAY

Mehmed and Omer RIDE ALONE outside the abandoned castle...
They find General Ismail slumped on the ground.

MEHMED

Stand to address me, Ismail.

General Ismail looks up, eyes wild.

GENERAL ISMAIL

A message from Prince Vlad...

(as if possessed)

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

Mehmed looks at Ismail with confusion...

GENERAL ISMAIL (CONT'D)

*I remember one night a terrible
thunderstorm came off the desert...
I'd known storms -- thunder shakes
these mountains every other day.
But you... you were terrified.*

(stares Mehmed down)

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

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

MEHMED

(to General Omer)

*Do the same to all the rest. Fear
is a sickness. I will not have it
spread.*

GENERAL OMER

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mehmed can read General Omer's face.

MEHMED

*You also think their Prince has
become a demon?*

GENERAL OMER

(reluctantly)

Ismail was not prone to fantasy.

MEHMED

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

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

MEHMED (CONT'D)

It was meant to kill me, of course.

GENERAL OMER

How did you survive?

MEHMED

(matter of fact)

*I pinned its tail with my fork.
And cut off its head with my knife.*

(beat)

Sorcery is no match for steel.

EXT. STEEP TRAIL - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

The caravan trudges on. Vlad leads. Mirena carries Ingeras, further back. Vlad can feel the distance between them...

The path has become STEEP and horses must be led ON FOOT. The climb is hard on the mothers weighed down by their young, the elderly on weak legs, the wounded on stretchers...

CAZAN

We're moving too slow, aren't we?

Vlad's troubled brow confirms it.

Simion slips, dirtying his silken sleeves. A SNOWFLAKE floats past Simion's face. The first of many.

SIMION "THE WISE"

And worse it gets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But Vlad LAUGHS. Simion doesn't understand why.

SIMION "THE WISE" (CONT'D)
I'm glad you're amused.

DIMITRU
(he understands)
The snow will cover our tracks.

EXT. CITY OF TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Snow swirls, steadily falling. Huge BONFIRES burn, fueled by the stacked bodies of Ismail's Army. The "plague" contained.

The Great Army waits... while Mehmed scans the mountains. The snow has dropped a blanket, smooth and white.

GENERAL OMER
We will never find their trail now.

Bright-Eyes steps forward. This time, flanked by TWO HUNDRED JANISSARIES, as steely and battle-hardened as he.

MEHMED
Do you agree with Omer?

Bright-Eyes takes a knee, bowing deep before his master.

BRIGHT-EYES
From high enough, one can find anything.

EXT. HIGH MOUNTAIN CLIFF - DAY

Bright-Eyes and the Janissaries CLIMB hand-over-hand up a vertiginous cliff. One carries a BASKET OF CARRIER PIGEONS.

None glance at the yawning drop below them... Single-minded predators tracking their prey.

EXT. ABANDONED GYPSY CAMP - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

Vlad's caravan reaches an ABANDONED CAMP. WAGON TRACKS branch away from the trail.

DIMITRU
Gypsies. Heading for the border.

VLAD
Good riddance. Let's get the horses watered.

INT. VLAD'S TENT - DAY

Mirena sits, worn-out, while Ingeras amuses himself with a rattle. Vlad tentatively ENTERS the tent...

VLAD

I'm sorry for last night.

Mirena nods, accepting his apology.

MIRENA

So what's wrong?

Vlad doesn't answer.

MIRENA (CONT'D)

Since when don't you tell me everything?

Vlad pauses. Uncomfortable hiding things from his wife.

VLAD

I'll tell you when I can.

Not the answer she wanted, but Mirena doesn't press further. Vlad tenderly brushes a stray lock from her face.

MIRENA

I must look terrible.

VLAD

You look beautiful.

MIRENA

Well, think of your people. If they see the princess with a bird's nest on her head, they'll think the country is doomed for sure.

Mirena picks up a HAND MIRROR to brush her hair.

Mirena sees her own reflection in the mirror, but not Vlad's.

Mirena looks back at Vlad with a chill...

VLAD

What is it?

Mirena snatches up Ingeras and runs OUT OF THE TENT...

Vlad picks up the mirror... and sees his reflection is gone forever.

EXT. ABANDONED GYPSY CAMP - MOUNTAINS - DAY

Mirena runs away from the camp, baby in her arms. Caught in a nightmare... Vlad follows calmly, trying to keep the situation under control...

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIVER - DAY

Out of sight from the camp, Mirena splashes THROUGH a shallow MOUNTAIN RIVER that divides the trail.

VLAD

There's nothing to be afraid of.

Shivering, Mirena hugs Ingeras on the far bank.

MIRENA

Stay away from us.

As Vlad approaches the river, the WATER becomes turbulent. The river itself RISES UP against Vlad like a living thing... violently BATTERING him back --

Mirena is astonished. The river itself bars Vlad's way.

Vlad retreats from the water's edge... and the river calms.

VLAD

(bitterly)

Baba Yaga, I can hear you laughing.

Dimitru ARRIVES, awkwardly entering what he assumes is a lover's spat.

VLAD (CONT'D)

(to Dimitru)

My wife needs dry clothes.

INT. VLAD'S TENT - DAY

Mirena, wrapped in blankets, is wretched with despair. She holds Ingeras tight, shielding the baby from Vlad.

MIRENA

When I looked in the mirror I
couldn't see you. How can that be?

VLAD

Because this isn't my face anymore.
(carefully)
I'm going to show you something
terrible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad concentrates, drops the mask of glamour... His demonic "Ekimmu" face revealed. Mirena gasps, repulsed.

MIRENA
You touched me...

VLAD
You're my wife.

In Vlad's red eyes, Mirena can still recognize her husband.

MIRENA
What are you?

VLAD
The thing men fear on Broken-Tooth.
Not a ghost. Something else.

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

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

VLAD
I chose this.

MIRENA
Why would you ever do such a thing?

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

Mirena reels, suddenly complicit as she looks at Ingeras...

VLAD (CONT'D)
Swords can't hurt me now. I'm
stronger. The Turks are terrified.

MIRENA
They should be.

Vlad glances down at the silver ring around his neck...

VLAD
I can still become a man again.

MIRENA
Then do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD

A man can't win this war.

Mirena can't disagree.

Vlad reaches out to touch her... but she flinches.

VLAD (CONT'D)

If I ever try to hurt you...

Vlad snaps the wooden handle off the hand mirror, leaving a sharp tip: an improvised STAKE.

VLAD (CONT'D)

A wooden stake through my heart
will kill me.

Vlad puts the stake in Mirena's hand. Her eyes well up.

MIRENA

It would kill us both.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIVER - DAY

Mirena finds Dimitru preparing the caravan to move once more.

MIRENA

The Prince has gone on ahead.

BEHIND A LINE OF TREES

Vlad watches his people ford the river, unable to follow. He sees Mirena look back, conflicted...

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIVER - LATER

Vlad follows the RIVER. Searching for a way to cross...

Ahead, he hears the TINKLING of BELLS... A line of GOATS file across a narrow GOAT BRIDGE that spans the river.

Excited, Vlad rushes toward the bridge... then stops. Sniffs the air. Tracks the smell... finds BLOOD staining the snow.

A GOATHERD lies DEAD, throat cut. Vlad hears HEARTBEATS...

BRIGHT-EYES AND THE JANISSARIES

Silently cross the goat bridge, tracking the caravan.

Vlad speeds to intercept them, but they've already disappeared up the valley by the time he reaches the bridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad casts a nervous glance at the running water... then STARTS ACROSS the bridge...

The river SWELLS UP -- Vlad barely JUMPS BACK before the bridge is SWEPT AWAY by the surge.

VLAD

Mirena...

But Vlad cannot warn her. He paces like a caged animal. The river a frothing, vindictive wall.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Get out of my way!

His voice echoes off impassive mountains. Mocking him.

Vlad notices BATS circling back and forth ACROSS THE RIVER...

An idea forming, Vlad gestures to A BAT... It obediently PERCHES on the underside of his hand.

EXT. GYPSY WAGON TRAIN - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - SUNSET

Dozens of colorful GYPSY WAGONS wind along a narrow trail...

Vlad EXPLODES into their midst, his black cape whipping. Desperate. No time for niceties.

Horses REAR in foaming panic. RIDERS are thrown. WOMEN AND CHILDREN scream and run when they see the one who has come...

Shkelgim's wagon is OVERTURNED. Shkelgim pulls himself and his young DAUGHTER from the wreck...

SHKELGIM

Hide.

Shkelgim watches his Daughter scurry for the TREES... Then he fumbles through his scattered things. Searching for

His silver CHARM. A dozen feet away. He reaches for it --

A boot comes down on Shkelgim's hand.

VLAD

I need something from you.

Shkelgim looks up at Vlad's human face. It scares him more than any monster's fanged visage...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHKELGIM

That is not possible... The blood-drinker hides behind the face of a man...

VLAD

I'm learning anything's possible. I killed one of your people last night...

(off Shkelgim's reaction)
At the time, he was a wolf.

SHKELGIM

(realizing)
The cursed ones are drawn to you...

VLAD

If you can turn a man into a wolf, you can turn him into something that can fly.

SHKELGIM

(appealing to Vlad)
Please, leave us in peace.

VLAD

(rage barely contained)
Soldiers are hunting my wife and child.

SHKELGIM

But we cannot choose what form this curse takes.

VLAD

Who can?

SHKELGIM

There is a beast inside each of us. By moonlight, the curse makes it real. The beast is ruled by instinct -- and instinct turns it into the strongest predator around.

(beat)
In India, tales are told of men who turn into tigers. In the north, bears. Here we have...

VLAD

Wolves. I know.

Shkelgim notices HUNDREDS OF WOLVES watching from the dusk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD (CONT'D)
And bats. Even vermin.

Shkelgim looks up incredulously: the sky is thick with BATS.

SHKELGIM
Mother-of-us-all...

VLAD
I control them, I can control this
curse of yours. It seems there's
more than one beast inside me.

Shkelgim digs deep, deeper than his fear. Defiant:

SHKELGIM
Curses are not for you to command.
You are an abomination --

Vlad hammers his FIST into the wagon, inches from Shkelgim.

VLAD
Call your Black Sarah.

Shkelgim's Daughter RUNS to her father.

SHKELGIM'S DAUGHTER
(crying, to Vlad)
Don't hurt him...

SHKELGIM
No, go back!

Vlad glances at Shkelgim with unforgiving eyes.

VLAD
Watching you die will be something
she'll never forget.

EXT. GYPSY CARAVAN - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Shkelgim kneels in a PENTAGRAM drawn in the dirt: a five-pointed star within a circle. WHITE CANDLES at the tips.

Vlad paces impatiently outside the circle, as Shkelgim recites an INCANTATION in a long-forgotten tongue...

VLAD
Pray faster.

Shkelgim looks to the FULL MOON:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHKELGIM

Black Sarah, Mother-of-us-all, set
your curse upon him. As your light
shines, let the beast come forth.

The MOON shines BRIGHTER... and a woman appears...

BLACK SARAH

Cold and sensual, with eyes deep as the night. Made of
silvery moonlight. Vlad gasps at her beauty. She slinks to
Vlad, trailing a gown as diaphanous as she is...

BLACK SARAH

I have been watching you.

Black Sarah leans in to give Vlad a KISS... So cold is Black
Sarah, that Vlad's lips turn blue.

Seduced for a moment, Vlad opens his eyes: Black Sarah has
VANISHED into moonlight.

Vlad CONVULSES... his body blurring into a SMOKY MEDIUM...

...VARIOUS FORMS fight each other for dominance, all made of
swirling smoke. The Wolf. The Bat. The Rat. In the end,
it is the Wolf that asserts its power and TAKES SHAPE:

Vlad has become a hulking BLACK WOLF.

SHKELGIM

You have your wish.

The Black Wolf HOWLS. More wolves pad out of the woods...
surround their master.

Rustling in the trees -- a STAG, frozen. It BOLTS OFF.

Shkelgim watches the Black Wolf instinctively CHASE the stag.

SHKELGIM (CONT'D)

You are not stronger than the beast
after all. You have forgotten
everything... Even your name.

EXT. NEAR THE BORGO PASS - CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

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

Below, the Transylvanian Caravan makes for the distant
Monastery...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Janissary Bird Keeper affixes a note to one of the CARRIER PIGEONS and releases it INTO THE AIR...

BRIGHT-EYES

*They think their house of God will
save them.*

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIVER - NIGHT

The Black Wolf leads its pack, hunting the stag. They bound over a rise... The Black Wolf slows when he sees

The RIVER. The pack surges past the Black Wolf, pouncing on the stag. While the pack feeds...

The Black Wolf paces, WHINING, eyes focused ACROSS THE RIVER.

A light that should be extinguished glimmers in its eyes... The Black Wolf fights with itself... A colossal effort...

The Black Wolf drags its snout along the ground, drawing MARKS IN THE SNOW... WE RISE UP TO REVEAL

FOUR LETTERS spelled in the snow: "VLAD."

The other wolves gather to watch... as the Black Wolf TRANSFORMS back into a smoky medium...

REFORMS as Vlad. Fully clothed. Drained from the exertion.

Vlad blinks as if waking from a fever dream. He feels his face... Himself again.

VLAD

(looks up at the moon)
Nobody makes me crawl, you bitch.

Vlad concentrates on the bats fluttering above his head... He FADES INTO SMOKE, swirling upward... coalescing into

A BLACK BAT with the wide wingspan of a hawk.

As a bat, Vlad flies high across the river. The water cannot stop him.

ON A NEARBY RIDGE

Shkelgim watches in disbelief as the Bat flies free.

Behind him, moonlight swirls... coalescing into Black Sarah, her face bent in fury. Shkelgim prostrates himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLACK SARAH

He has let me touch him, and now he
is mine...

UP IN THE NIGHT SKY

Vlad flies as a Bat, searching for his people...

BLACK SARAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I will visit him at dawn and he
will learn to fear the sky.

EXT. BORGO PASS - NIGHT

A wide valley flanked by steep forest on both sides.

Mirena rides in the middle of the caravan. Ingeras in her
arms. Dimitru leads. Everyone is cold and exhausted...

A bell RINGS the call to Matins. It echoes through the pass,
as they catch their first glimpse of the Monastery...

SIMION "THE WISE"

These monks better have a wine
cellar.

CAZAN

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

SIMION "THE WISE"

It was good enough for the Last
Supper.

Dimitru shushes them. Warily scans the WOODED CLIFFS...

THE JANISSARIES

Burst from the cliffs in precision groups. Cutting through
overmatched soldiers up and down the line...

Bright-Eyes glides through the mayhem. Hunting...

THROUGHOUT THE CARAVAN

COMBAT flares. Peasants run wildly for the Monastery...

MIRENA ON HORSEBACK

Caught in the STAMPEDE. Friendly hands lift Mirena and
Ingeras from the saddle: FIVE BRAWNY SOLDIERS led by Cazan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAZAN
Get them inside.

AT THE GATES OF THE MONASTERY

The Monks guide the first wave of fleeing Peasants inside...

FAT BROTHER JAKOB
Inside. Quickly.

Simion shoves his way past Peasant families...

MIRENA

Clutching Ingeras, RUNS with her cadre of soldiers...

Bright-Eyes cuts them off. One against five.

Bright-Eyes whirls into the soldiers like a dervish, wielding TWO SCIMITARS like silver flashes. The soldiers are gutted, no match for Bright-Eyes' skill...

Bright-Eyes glimpses Mirena dashing INTO THICK WOODS...

INT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - NIGHT

Mirena RUNS through a MAZE OF PINES until she hits a steep incline, dropping to a CHASM.

Mirena hugs her agitated son close...

MIRENA
Shh... Ingeras... shh...

Bright-Eyes steps from the trees.

Mirena meets his baby blue eyes. Unhurried, he raises his sword --

A GROWL stays his hand...

THE BLACK WOLF

VAULTS at Bright-Eyes --

Bright-Eyes pivots, swings his scimitars -- The Black Wolf SNAPS at his hand --

One scimitar and two fingers fall into the snow.

The Black Wolf leaps again. Bright-Eyes throws a forearm into its jaws. The Black Wolf CLAMPS DOWN --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The combatants TUMBLE down the incline TOWARD THE CHASM...

The Black Wolf regains its footing. Releases Bright-Eyes --

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

Victorious, the Black Wolf looses a HOWL. Answered by a
chilling CHORUS as

HUNDREDS OF WOLVES

Bound down snowy cliffs. The snarling mass bypasses Peasants
to POUNCE only on the Janissaries, ripping out their throats.

DIMITRU

Catches up to Mirena, throws a protective arm around her --

The Black Wolf sees only a threat to his wife and son.

The Black Wolf LEAPS, RAKING Dimitru with its claws.
Dimitru's head hits the frozen ground -- he's KNOCKED OUT.

The Black Wolf lunges for Dimitru's throat -- then stops
itself... finally recognizing his unconscious friend.

The Wolf TRANSFORMS back into Vlad. Mirena watches, stunned.

MIRENA (CONT'D)

My God...

Vlad grabs Mirena by both shoulders to make sure she and
Ingeras are unhurt... Mirena blanches, but Ingeras
innocently reaches for his father.

VLAD

You have to trust me.

Mirena has a million thoughts colliding in her head...

MIRENA

I trust your heart. Not your
judgement.

Vlad sees Dimitru's BLOOD under his fingernails, guiltily
notes where his claws scratched Dimitru's chest...

Vlad kneels to revive his friend. Dimitru sits up, unaware.

VLAD

Are you alright?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DIMITRU
Guess I'm too big to eat.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

The wolves finish the Janissaries... Without their master's influence, the wolves turn their attention to fresher meat... Women and children huddle behind their terrified men...

Vlad STRIDES in. Kicks a wolf in the ribs.

VLAD
Get out of here!

The wolves DISPERSE, leaving Vlad's people in shock.

Vlad sees dozens slain by the Janissaries, the survivors mourning loved ones. All Vlad feels is rage.

Vlad finds the dying Janissary Bird Keeper drooped over the basket of PIGEONS, dripping blood on the frenzied birds.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Let's inform the Sultan of your sacrifice.

Vlad kicks the Janissary aside to set the birds FREE.

NEAR THE MONASTERY GATE

Peasants bear dead and injured inside... while Fat Brother Jakob leads a sizable group of the traumatized in PRAYER.

Vlad INTERRUPTS their praying, outraged.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Prayers won't carry our injured inside. Get off your knees and help.

Fat Brother Jakob is taken aback. The Peasants look stung.

CAZAN
What's wrong with you?

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

CAZAN
Can't you see they're more afraid of those wolves than any Turk?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Realizing this only makes Vlad angrier.

VLAD
The wolves are gone.

CAZAN
They weren't acting like wolves.

VLAD
Lucky for us.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - NIGHT

A STOUT JANISSARY, a hidden survivor, catches his breath...
A shadow looms behind him...

Bright-Eyes. Alive. A trail in the snow leads back to the cliff's edge... He puts one of his three remaining fingers to his lips. Shhh.

EXT. CATHEDRAL AVIARY - TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

General Omer climbs up to the Aviary... He finds the Sultan alone. Breath coming in cold puffs. Something is wrong.

GENERAL OMER
Word from the Janissaries?

Mehmed gestures to the BLOODSTAINED PIGEONS flitting about...
His eyes stay fixed on the mountains, the way Vlad went.

MEHMED
*When we fought as boys, I would
beat him every time. But once, I
caught him smiling at me. I knew
what his smile said...*
(beat)
*If this were not your house... if
you were not the Sultan's son...*

Mehmed dusts himself off...

MEHMED (CONT'D)
Prepare the men for a climb.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

Intense activity as the people READY DEFENSES. Monks lend a hand as TRENCHES are dug...

...and hundreds of WOODEN POLES are sharpened and planted at low angles to deter a frontal attack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad inspects the work when a VOICE from behind startles him.
It's Brother Lucian.

BROTHER LUCIAN
I had a dream about this.

VLAD
(carefully)
What kind of dream?

BROTHER LUCIAN
Come inside and I'll show you.

INT. MONASTERY LIBRARY - NIGHT

Brother Lucian shows Vlad a woodcut ILLUSTRATION from a bound volume. It shows a version of Vlad's fanged demonic face...

BROTHER LUCIAN
The ancient Assyrians named it
"Ekimmu." A drinker of blood,
forever thirsty.

VLAD
Why does it need blood?

BROTHER LUCIAN
To give it life. There is no
greater affront to our Creator.
(beat)
Leviticus 17. Quoth the Lord: "If
any man eat blood, I will set my
face against his soul. For the
life of all flesh is in the blood."

Brother Lucian crosses himself as he regards the grimacing
"Ekimmu" illustration:

BROTHER LUCIAN (CONT'D)
It is a creation of the Devil.

Vlad absorbs this information with dread...

VLAD
The Devil made them? Why?

BROTHER LUCIAN
To start Armageddon. It is written
the End Days will begin when the
dead walk the earth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD

Surely there's more to the Word of
God than dire prophecy.

BROTHER LUCIAN

Yes, but it is how the book ends.

Brother Lucian eyes Vlad with the intensity of a mad prophet.

BROTHER LUCIAN (CONT'D)

I saw the sun blotted out. The
Devil's children ruled a dead
earth. Led by the Antichrist
himself. Coming here, to this
monastery. I saw it.

(points to the book)

I saw this face.

Vlad can't tell if Brother Lucian suspects him or not...

VLAD

You saw the Antichrist?

BROTHER LUCIAN

Yes. And now I know who it is...

(after a beat)

The Sultan Mehmed. The heathen
Turk is coming here, is he not?

Vlad LAUGHS, relieved. Mostly relieved.

VLAD

I'm going to kill Mehmed. Today.

BROTHER LUCIAN

The Antichrist cannot be slain by
men. Only by the power of God.

(beat)

How strong is your faith?

VLAD

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

INT. OUTSIDE MIRENA'S CHAMBERS - MONASTERY - NIGHT

Vlad dismisses the TWO SOLDIERS standing guard outside the
door... but PAUSES when he hears Mirena SINGING INSIDE.

Vlad peers in. Catches Mirena in a private moment, warming
Ingeras before a FIREPLACE. The baby sleeps, snug. Mirena
is not singing to calm Ingeras, but herself...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad doesn't disturb them.

VLAD
(quietly)
Not even the Devil will keep us
apart.

EXT. SMITHY - MONASTERY GROUNDS - JUST BEFORE DAWN

BLACKSMITH MONKS toil over anvils, repairing arms and armor within the SMITHY, a separate hut on the monastery grounds.

Vlad KNOCKS on the doorjamb. A man on a mission.

VLAD
I need a sword.

A Monk presents Vlad a blade from an arsenal of weapons.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Mehmed's neck will be honored.

Alone, Vlad heads

OUT THE GATE

A WOMAN wanders alone in the snowy valley, cast blue as dawn comes... No one but Vlad sees her.

VLAD (CONT'D)
You shouldn't be out here...

It is Black Sarah. Her eyes brim with malice. Vlad knows his sword will do him no good.

BLACK SARAH
My justice is not a thing to twist
to your own ends. If the Prince
shuns the kiss of moonlight, let
him endure the bite of the sun.

Black Sarah VANISHES as

The SUN RISES. DAYLIGHT floods the valley --

As the first rays of the sun touch Vlad... the BLOOD BEGINS
TO BURN in his veins.

Vlad BURSTS INTO FLAME. Runs for the Smithy, the closest shelter...

Peasants and Monks trip back in terror as THEY SEE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad's demonic face revealed.

Dimitru crosses himself, disbelieving his eyes... Brother Lucian drops the books he was moving to safety.

BROTHER LUCIAN
God in heaven...

Vlad's silver signet ring falls to the ground unnoticed, the cord burned away...

Engulfed in flames, Vlad is STOPPED by the unseen force at the door of the Smithy.

Vlad grabs Brother Lucian by the shirt, igniting the fabric.

VLAD
Invite me in or I'll kill him.

BLACKSMITH MONK
(terrorized)
Come in.

Vlad releases Brother Lucian and runs

INSIDE THE SMITHY

Vlad takes refuge in SHADOW as Blacksmith Monks flee. Vlad is in agony, flesh charred black.

The thousand HEARTBEATS outside the Smithy are a CACOPHONY.

EXT. SMITHY - MONASTERY GROUNDS - DAY

Fear has overtaken everyone. Monks try to minister calm, but they are just as shaken... Dimitru, Captain Petru and the Castle Guard have cordoned off the Smithy...

Mirena, carrying Ingeras, pushes past the ranks of soldiers.

INT. SMITHY - MONASTERY GROUNDS - DAY

Vlad lies on the ground, his burnt flesh disintegrating...

Mirena ENTERS with Ingeras.

VLAD
Go away...

MIRENA
You need help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

Vlad fumbles for the SILVER SIGNET RING around his neck...
and finds it is gone.

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

MIRENA (CONT'D)

Vlad?

A terrifying beat.

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

Vlad bares his FANGS. Lowers his jaw to her throat --

One sound cuts through the thunder. Ingeras CRYING.

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

VLAD

I'm sorry...

Mirena RUNS OUT OF THE SMITHY with her wailing son.

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

VLAD (CONT'D)

I didn't do it...

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

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

INT. SMITHY - LATER

Vlad is HEALED. He waves his fingers out the doorway, testing... The sun SINGES the tips. Still trapped.

Peering outside, he sees Mirena emotionally talking to Dimitru. Vlad is too far away to hear what she is saying...

Dimitru drops his chin to his chest as he listens... Then gathering himself, he nods.

Vlad watches Dimitru take an ARROW from a quiver. SNAP OFF the arrowhead. Whittle the wooden shaft to a sharp point...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD
You told them.

Vlad sees Mirena bury her head in Brother Lucian's chest, desperate for comfort or forgiveness. Vlad keeps his eyes on his wife as Lucian guides her inside... leaving him alone.

Vlad feels a suffocating wave of sadness.

Vlad watches members of his own Castle Guard raise their hands to volunteer... Led by Dimitru, they APPROACH the Smithy. Armed with bow and wood-tipped arrows...

VLAD (CONT'D)
Dimitru, don't do this.

Dimitru hesitates...

DIMITRU
You're not Vlad.

VLAD
(looks him in the eye)
What if I am?

DIMITRU
I still wouldn't go to hell for you.

Dimitru raises his bow and SHOOTS.

HUNDREDS OF ARROWS are loosed at the Smithy. HURTLING through doors and windows...

Vlad ducks. The deadly wooden missiles IMPACT around him. Arrows PIERCE Vlad's arms and legs.

Vlad CRIES OUT as one nearly punctures his HEART. Vlad pulls the arrow out. He survived the first volley...

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

VLAD
(angrily)
Petru... Janos... Stop this.

But all he finds are the unforgiving stares of his executioners. Their cheeks flushed with rabid hate.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vlad clenches his teeth as the light rakes his flesh...
Ducking another HAIL OF ARROWS raining in through the fire...
Running out of time...

Vlad notes the pile of drained rats. Vlad focuses his
mind... and TRANSFORMS into a BLACK RAT himself.

OUTSIDE

The Black Rat RUNS into the MOVING SHADOWS of the men feeding
the blaze...

The Black Rat accompanies the soldiers as they retreat from
the pyre... darting from WALKING SHADOW TO WALKING SHADOW
underfoot, just barely AVOIDING THE direct rays of the SUN...

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

VLAD

Crouches in a shadowed cleft in the cliffs above... Below,
fire collapses the Smithy.

Vlad's eyes fix on Dimitru. Hungry for vengeance.

EXT. MONASTERY GROUNDS - SUNSET

Mirena and Simion approach the charred Smithy, where Dimitru
pokes through the ashes with a stick...

It's hard for Mirena to be so near where her husband died.
Trying to come to terms with her actions. Her grief.

MIRENA

We need to finish the defenses.

SIMION "THE WISE"

What chance do we have now?

(voice lowered)

I have a cousin in the Ukraine.
There are enough horses for the
three of us.

MIRENA

And leave everyone else to be
butchered by Turks or die running?

DIMITRU

(quietly, to Mirena)

You knew. Before you said anything
to me, you knew.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIRENA
I loved him.

Dimitru looks up at Mirena. Now she can see his fear...

DIMITRU
There's no body.

Mirena's stomach twists in a knot.

Captain Petru overhears Dimitru... and immediately SPREADS
THE NEWS. Word that Vlad still lives floods the Monastery...

Chaos. Peasants drop their swords. The "army" degenerates
into a terrified jumble, running in all directions...

Simion pulls a PEASANT WOMAN off her horse to take it for
himself, before he himself is dragged down by a mob fighting
for one of the precious few horses...

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

VLAD

Walks through their midst carrying a sharpened pole from the
defenses.

Mirena sucks in her breath when she sees him.

Dimitru's throat tightens. He looks at the pole... then back
at Vlad. Vlad glares with unbridled anger.

VLAD
You were my friend.

Vlad drives the pole THROUGH DIMITRU'S CHEST, killing him
instantly. Vlad lifts the body into the air and plants the
pole in the ground.

Simion runs... Vlad seizes him and throws him to the ground.

VLAD (CONT'D)
No one runs.

Neither Peasants nor Boyars dare move a muscle...

VLAD (CONT'D)
You all know the punishment for
treason.

MIRENA
Are you going to kill me too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD

Kill you? I'm trying to save you.

Vlad fixes furious eyes on each man who joined Dimitru...

VLAD (CONT'D)

(to Simion)

Round up the traitors.

They are gathered at sword point. Everyone afraid...

VLAD (CONT'D)

Impale all of them. You've seen
how the Turks do it. Avoid the
heart.

(beat)

I want them to live long enough to
see our victory.

Vlad's Peasant Army picks up the sharpened poles... The
order is terrible, but what choice do they have?

Under Vlad's gaze, the IMPALING begins. Mirena weeps.

The Peasants watch as a forest springs up, a forest of Vlad's
enemies hung to die... The Prince's hard justice.

Brother Lucian EMERGES from the crowd, his CRUCIFIX raised.
The other Monks follow suit in a wall of solidarity...

BROTHER LUCIAN

Kneel before the power of our Lord
Christ.

Vlad looks at the power of God arrayed against him. Crosses
wielded by brave-hearted men of faith.

VLAD

If your Lord Christ wants me to
kneel, He can ask me Himself.

Fat Brother Jakob wavers. His cross is having no effect on
Vlad.

FAT BROTHER JAKOB

He should not be able to
withstand... This isn't possible.

BROTHER LUCIAN

(to Vlad)

It means there is hope for you.
Your soul is still your own.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Vlad takes the crucifix out of Brother Lucian's hand and drops it in the dirt.

VLAD

Go back to your books.

Brother Lucian and the other Monks RETREAT.

Vlad ADDRESSES everyone. Mirena knows he's talking to her.

VLAD (CONT'D)

If I were a thing of evil, I would
have been destroyed by these monks.
But they were wrong. Because my
cause is just.

Vlad scans the faces of his soldiers... Peasants and farmers
now scarred by violence.

VLAD (CONT'D)

The war for our country will be
decided here, on this ground. Now
take your positions.

They obey.

Vlad finds Cazan leaning against a gnarled tree.

VLAD (CONT'D)

They tried to kill me. Any prince
would do the same.

CAZAN

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

(beat)

But you're still one of them.

VLAD

At least they're not soft.

(turns to leave)

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

EXT. MEHMED'S ARMY - BORGO PASS - NIGHT

Three hundred thousand Turks march up the valley to drumbeat.

Mehmed gazes ahead with anticipation: the Monastery can now
be seen, miles distant. A long slope straight to its gates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

General Omer grows fearful as they draw closer...

MEHMED

I have never seen you like this.

GENERAL OMER

I just wish we had the cannons.

MEHMED

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

Mehmed signals. The drums STOP. The Great Army halts.

MEHMED (CONT'D)

(to his men)

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

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

MEHMED (CONT'D)

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

(beat)

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

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

MEHMED (CONT'D)

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

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE BORGO PASS - NIGHT

The BLACK BAT flies HIGH ABOVE the marching Turkish army...
From this height, Mehmed's golden armor is a mere speck to be
brushed away...

The Bat DIVES -- zeroes in on its golden target. Hurtling
toward Mehmed, the sound of DRUMMING grows LOUDER --

Mehmed's helmet looks up too late as the Black Bat is upon
him, TRANSFORMING back into Vlad's human form --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD
Your war ends now.

Vlad tears off Mehmed's helmet --

But this is NOT MEHMED: it is his boyish-faced ADJUTANT. A DECOY wearing golden armor.

VLAD (CONT'D)
(grabs him by the throat)
Where is he?

DECOY MEHMED
No one knows...

Vlad scans the Great Army in its multitude... Mehmed could be any one of them. A needle in a haystack.

VLAD
Coward. Show your face.

Then Vlad realizes something is wrong. The marching Turkish Soldiers do not seem to be aware of him...

Vlad STRIKES a Turk down. The soldier SCREAMS as he DIES...

The army marches on. Their discipline unwavering...

Vlad pulls off the dead Turk's helmet -- sees the soldier is BLINDFOLDED and his ears packed with BEES' WAX. It's the same with every Turkish Soldier...

MEHMED IN THE TURKISH RANKS

Dressed as a common soldier, he blends in with the rest. But his eyes and ears are uncovered.

MEHMED
(to himself)
You cannot fear what you cannot see.

ON VLAD. Watching with futility... The Turkish Army STRIDES blindly past him in pace to the thundering drums.

Hundreds wide. Thousands deep. They'll arrive by dawn.

EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE THE MONASTERY - NIGHT

Vlad stands on a SPUR OF ROCK overlooking the Monastery's makeshift defenses... Dawn ticks ever closer...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Everyone can finally see the Turkish army: a great SEA OF TORCHES rhythmically advancing to the boom of DRUMS...

Vlad CURSES. On the brink. He THROWS a rock in frustration.

The wind stops blowing, as if time were suspended.

Vlad sees a DARK-FEATURED MAN standing next to him. Still too dark to see him clearly... but his VOICE is like velvet.

DARK-FEATURED MAN

Is this where you choose to watch
your world end?

Vlad's bravado fails in this man's presence...

VLAD

Who are you?

DARK-FEATURED MAN

I have names that are familiar to
you, and many more that are not...

For the Dark-Featured Man is

LUCIFER. Himself.

LUCIFER

...but you will come to call me
"Savior."

VLAD

Why have you come to me?

LUCIFER

The sun itself opposes you. A man
is judged by the quality of his
enemies. No one knows this better
than I...

(beat)

The first rays of dawn reach for
this valley. And then the Grand
Turk will take everything from you.

VLAD

I'm not afraid of Mehmed.

LUCIFER

I recognize lies quite well.

VLAD

I'll find a way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUCIFER

I am the way.

(beat)

You need not fear the rising sun.
I can give you power to annul it.

Vlad looks to the horizon, out of options...

VLAD

What's the price?

LUCIFER

Blood.

(clarifying)

Of men, not rats.

VLAD

If I do it I can never go back.

LUCIFER

Nothing blinds men like hope.

(beat)

I am the master of you and all your
kind. If you want to return to
your old life, you must defeat me.
I will even tell you how.

Lucifer raises his palms to heaven...

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

Put your soul in the sure hands of
the Almighty. Have faith He will
deliver you from every evil.

(sneers)

Submit to God.

Vlad wrestles with the thought...

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

I couldn't do it. Can you?

Vlad knows he can't. The dream of regaining his humanity
slipping away...

LUCIFER (CONT'D)

The blood is the life. Drink it in
my name. It is a small price to
save all you love.

Vlad considers the offer... then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VLAD

No.

Lucifer blinks at the rebuke.

LUCIFER

Time is running out.

Vlad is startled by the rock CLATTERING as it falls. Didn't Vlad throw it a minute ago?

Lucifer is GONE. The SOUNDS of life return.

Dawn threatens. The Turkish Army clogs the pass...

Vlad's hand slips in his pocket. Finds a crumpled parchment:

The TERMS OF SURRENDER Mehmed offered and Vlad refused. Choices made, chances lost. Seems like a thousand years ago.

Vlad notes Mehmed's THUMBPRINT in BLOOD, now dried brown...

Vlad's eyes glint with an idea. He lowers his nose to Mehmed's blood print and CATCHES THE SCENT...

VLAD

I'll find you, you son of a bitch.

Vlad gestures to the sky... First one BAT, then another comes to Vlad...

EXT. NEAR THE MONASTERY - NIGHT

Hiding, Bright-Eyes and the Stout Janissary can hear their army's DRUMS. Bright-Eyes scans the Monastery defenses...

BRIGHT-EYES

Look there...

They spot Mirena holding Ingeras. She's watching the Turks approach from a BALCONY on the highest tower.

Bright-Eyes sees there is no way he can get to her, with the walls bristling with so many Transylvanian Soldiers...

BRIGHT-EYES (CONT'D)

Get word to the Sultan.

EXT. MEHMED'S ARMY - BORGO PASS - NIGHT

Mehmed MARCHES among his thousands, deep within his blindfolded army...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

General Omer weaves through the ranks to report, the Stout Janissary at his side.

GENERAL OMER
*Word from behind their lines. It
 hardly matters now, but Vlad's
 child has been found.*

Mehmed does not respond because his eyes are drawn upward...

THOUSANDS OF BATS

Descend on the blindfolded FRONT RANKS.

Tiny fangs BITE exposed skin, drawing BLOOD... but the Turks resist tearing off their blindfolds. The march CONTINUES...

MEHMED AND GENERAL OMER

Watch the swarm of bats moving TOWARD THEM, leaving no Turkish soldier untouched...

GENERAL OMER (CONT'D)
Bats cannot kill men.

Mehmed feels a dawning alarm...

MEHMED
He is looking for me.

VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR

Sniffs the air. Tensed to strike...

THE TRANSYLVANIAN PEASANT SOLDIERS

Shudder as the Turks bear down. How can they face so many?

MEHMED

Runs to the Drummers... Tears off the LEADER'S blindfold...

MEHMED (CONT'D)
Stop the march.

The Drummers cease beating. Soldiers pull off their blindfolds, ready to fight... but see a MAELSTROM OF BATS. They react with primal fear.

MEHMED (CONT'D)
 (feigning fear)
Run for your lives.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Their Sultan's "cowardice" breaks them. The Turks FLEE...

MEHMED (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Come, Vlad. Take the bait.

Mehmed sees the BATS almost upon him, and runs... Hoping his last ditch ruse will work...

VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR

Sees the Turks falling back... Senses the advantage swing.
SHOUTS down to his men:

VLAD
Kill them while they run.

THE TRANSYLVANIAN ARMY

Charges INTO THE VALLEY. Maybe there is hope after all...

BRIGHT-EYES

Sees the Transylvanians unknowingly clear a path for him.
The Sultan has given him his opportunity. Bright-Eyes
sprints to the Monastery, SCALES THE WALL...

MIRENA ON HER BALCONY

Holds Ingeras, watching the battle turn. Her heart lifts...

A THUD outside her chamber door... Bright-Eyes ENTERS
holding a bloody sword. Dead guards at his feet.

BRIGHT-EYES
*Your son will live. But he will
not remember you.*

MIHAI

Bursts into the room, hefting a sword too heavy for him...
Bright-Eyes BACKHANDS Mihai like the child he is.

Mihai bravely repeats the *Turkish insult* Vlad taught him.
Bright-Eyes stops cold. We've never seen him angry before.

Bright-Eyes SLASHES Mihai's Achilles tendon, raises his sword
to finish him off --

Mirena flings a shovelful of HOT COALS from the fireplace in
Bright-Eyes' face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Mirena runs with her baby back out ONTO THE BALCONY... as the first RAYS OF THE SUN strike the mountain peaks...

MEHMED ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Swats at attacking BATS. Teeth BITE his hands, draw BLOOD --

VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR

Catches Mehmed's scent in the air. The tumult of battle is filtered out... Mehmed's distant figure becomes clear.

VLAD

Got you.

ON THE HIGH BALCONY

Bright-Eyes lunges for Mirena. She jumps over the edge onto

THE ROOF OF THE CLOISTERS

She falls, cradling Ingeras. Roof tiles CUT her shoulder --

VLAD ON THE ROCK SPUR

Freezes. He can smell her blood too.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Mirena.

Vlad dives OFF THE CLIFF -- transforms into a BAT mid-air. Black wings speed him toward the Monastery...

MIRENA ON THE ROOF

Moves carefully over ICY TILES. The roof angles down and ends in a SHEER DROP. Ingeras squirms in her arms, upset.

Bright-Eyes PURSUES. Mirena SLIPS... Holding the baby, she has only one hand free... She SLIDES halfway over the ROOF'S EDGE.

Feet dangling. Losing her grip...

No choice. Mirena secures Ingeras in the rain gutter. With two hands, she can hang on a minute longer...

VLAD AS A BAT

Sees his wife hanging from the roof... Almost there...

The SUN RISES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Sunlight IGNITES Vlad like a shooting star... he CRASHES on the high balcony...

In the form of a man, his body haloed in fire, Vlad crawls INTO MIRENA'S CHAMBERS

Vlad is trapped in the shade, his body ravaged. He has a stomach-churning VIEW of his wife and child's plight:

MIRENA ON THE ROOF

Hands slipping... Bright-Eyes stands above her.

Without saying a word, Bright-Eyes PICKS UP INGERAS. Ingeras CRIES in panic.

Bright-Eyes sees Vlad watching helplessly... Bright-Eyes tucks the baby under his arm, dips in a window and is GONE.

VLAD

Reaches out to his wife, only to BURN when he touches the light. There's nothing he can do.

Vlad looks across the room at Mihai, who stares back in fear.

Finally, in a quiet voice:

VLAD (CONT'D)
Lucifer. I'll give you what you want.

Vlad sinks his fangs into Mihai's neck and DRINKS until the boy is dead.

ON VLAD. He can feel his hands COURSING WITH POWER... his will now able to enact what his heart desperately desires...

VLAD (CONT'D)
(to Mirena)
Hold on...

Vlad pushes his hands into the air, as if moving an invisible mountain...

THE SKY OVER THE MONASTERY

Is stained from horizon to horizon by STORM CLOUDS, blacker than man has ever seen. Day becomes NIGHT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MIRENA

Can't hold on. She FALLS --

Vlad CATCHES Mirena's arm. Pulls her up...

...exposing the CRUCIFIX that hangs from her neck.

The CROSS GLOWS WITH WHITE LIGHT in Vlad's presence. A light Vlad cannot bear. The power of God repels him.

Vlad is forced back. The two stare at each other.

MIRENA

What have you done?

Mirena lets go of the roof, choosing her fate.

Vlad reaches for her... but the light of the cross forces him back.

Mirena falls away from Vlad... into the abyss.

MEHMED WITH HIS ARMY

Stares curiously up at the darkened sky... then turns his attention to the Transylvanians.

MEHMED

(irritated, to Omer)

Attack.

AT THE MONASTERY WALLS

Simion and the Boyars watch their front lines overwhelmed.

SIMION "THE WISE"

This is madness.

Simion and the Boyars quietly abandon their men. The cowards slip into the mountains...

CAZAN INSIDE THE MONASTERY

Stands among the Monks, women and children. He can only watch as the Turks SURGE IN, cutting down Peasant Soldiers.

A Turk CLUBS Cazan across the brow.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

Vlad cradles his wife's DEAD BODY, wracked with sobs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD

Mirena...

Nearby, her cross still smolders with white heat.

Vlad looks up at the approaching Turks... His grief and rage bordering on madness...

Vlad CHARGES the whole Turkish Army, fury unmatched. Smashes into their lines. One against three hundred thousand.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Kill you all.

Frightened Azabs set their lances. Vlad careens into them, heedless. Lances snap like twigs, but PIERCE his flesh.

Vlad turns on an echelon of Sipahis... but one thing keeps them from dropping their swords and running:

They see that Vlad BLEEDS.

The Turks fight back. Landing blow after blow. For every Turk Vlad kills, ten more take their place... and there is only so fast he can heal...

Vlad goes to one knee, pouring blood. Struggles to his feet to meet the next wave of Turks.

Every Turk wants a piece now. To avenge their brethren. To say that on this day they killed the one who could not die.

WE SEE FROM HIGH ABOVE

Vlad is merely one man in an ocean of Turks. He is ENGULFED.

The clouds RECEDE... The SKY CLEARS...

The sun IGNITES the Un-Dead blood staining Turkish blades... Everywhere Vlad's blood poured or spattered is AFLAME...

Vlad lies drained from a thousand cuts. He does not burn. He doesn't have any blood left in him.

MEHMED

You were just flesh after all.

Vlad sees Mehmed gazing down, carrying a distressed Ingeras.

MEHMED (CONT'D)

I will not make the same mistake my father did.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MEHMED (CONT'D)

I will have to stunt this little
weed so he does not grow so strong.

Vlad can say nothing. LIFELESS eyes stare up at his son.

MEHMED (CONT'D)

(to his men)

*Bury him next to his wife. Mark
his grave, "Here lies Kaziglu Bey".*

Mehmed shows the baby the FOREST OF THE IMPALED.

MEHMED (CONT'D)

It is what your father will be
remembered for.

EXT. A DARK HOLE - DAY

We see through VLAD'S POINT OF VIEW... Our vision fogged,
our hearing MUTED... as if filtered through a veil of sleep:

A rectangle of SKY framed by four walls of dirt. Turkish
Soldiers peer down at us, then dump shovelfuls of EARTH...

CLOSE ON Vlad's glassy eyes as he's smothered in DARKNESS.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

The Turks are gone. So are the Monks and Peasants. Only the
dead, and those soon to follow, remain...

Cazan limps from the abandoned Monastery, a gash on his
forehead where he was struck. He kneels AT VLAD'S GRAVE.

CAZAN

You're not finished.

Cazan claws at the earth, trying to dig Vlad out...

It's futile. Cazan stops, bowed in grief. BLOOD from his
scraped fingers DRIPS onto the dirt...

Cazan notices the droplet STIR... slowly MOVING... drawn by
some dark force INTO THE GROUND.

Cazan thinks he understands. He SLICES his wrists. The
BLOOD is sucked greedily into Vlad's grave...

FINGERS push up from below... Vlad claws his way OUT OF HIS
GRAVE. Layered with dirt. Alive and angry.

Vlad sees Cazan kneeling...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLAD
Where's my son?

CAZAN
Mehmed took him to Giurgiu. He
took all of them. To decorate the
shores with corpses all the way to
Vienna...

Vlad catches Cazan as he slumps. Only now does Vlad see
Cazan's cut wrists and realize the sacrifice...

VLAD
Do you want to kill them?

CAZAN
Yes.

Vlad CUTS HIS OWN WRIST, gently presses it to Cazan's lips...

VLAD
Drink.

Cazan DRINKS... Un-Dead blood flows through him... Vlad
tenderly holds Cazan until he dies.

Vlad looks up at the FOREST OF THE IMPALED...

The punished soldiers hang on the edge of death. But they
are not dead yet.

EXT. MONASTERY - LATER

Vlad stands at Mirena's grave. Cloak snapping in the wind...

VLAD
I know hell exists, so I know
there's a heaven. You're there.
So I know I'll never see you again.
(beat)
But your soul can rest knowing that
I will get our son back.

Standing behind Vlad

An ARMY OF VAMPIRES.

For this is the name by which they will come to be known...
Vlad's soldiers' eyes are now red and hungry.

VLAD (CONT'D)
The angels can't help anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vlad turns to his new army. They BOW. Obedient servants.

Cazan bows too. Now unnaturally strong and vibrant. No need for a cane. His hand and foot have been RESTORED...

Simion "The Wise" and the Boyars huddle in the vampires' midst. Still alive. Trembling like children.

VLAD (CONT'D)
(to Simion)
Pick up a handful of dirt from my
grave. Bring it here.

A bizarre request, but Simion obeys. Simion carries a handful of BURIAL EARTH to Vlad's outstretched palm...

Vlad can't hold onto the dirt. It's PULLED from his fingers by an unseen force... BACK into his GRAVE.

Vlad considers the results of this experiment...

VLAD (CONT'D)
I can't move it. But you can.
Fill up a coffin.

Simion backs away from the leering blood-drinkers...

SIMION "THE WISE"
Just don't make me one of them.

VLAD
I won't, Simion...

Vlad STARES into Simion's eyes... enslaving his mind.

VLAD (CONT'D)
I need human pallbearers.

EXT. BALCONY - GIURGIU FORTRESS - NIGHT

Mehmed stands with General Omer overlooking his new possession: Transylvania.

MEHMED
*Of all my lands, this one I love
the least.*

Mehmed's Great Army is ready to board their boats.

At a nearby FISHING VILLAGE, Vlad's PEASANTS have been interned in the TOWN SQUARE. Cattle awaiting slaughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bright-Eyes JOINS Mehmed on the balcony.

BRIGHT-EYES

*I picked out boys of Janissary age.
We will not leave empty handed.*

MEHMED

We were never going to.

General Omer stares at the horizon, confused:

GENERAL OMER

*Look to the east. The sun. It
does not rise...*

Where the sunrise should be, a STORM is gathering...

ON MEHMED. He realizes it isn't over.

EXT. COURTYARD - GIURGIU FORTRESS - NIGHT

Bolts of LIGHTNING scar the night sky...

General Omer paces before a REGIMENT of Azabs on high alert. Bright-Eyes stands apart. His gaze is drawn overhead... To the flapping of WINGS, invisible in the dark...

VLAD

APPEARS alone. Surrounded by Turkish spears once again.

GENERAL OMER

You've come.

VLAD

*It's my fortress. I don't need an
invitation.*

GENERAL OMER

(to his men)

He can be beaten. You've seen it.

The Azabs edge forward... Vlad makes no move.

A SWARM OF BATS streams over the fortress walls...

GENERAL OMER (CONT'D)

Your bats don't scare us.

VLAD

*I don't care about scaring you
anymore.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bats reform into VLAD'S VAMPIRE ARMY. Hungry for blood.

Hundreds of vampires alight on shrieking Turks... Climbing sheer stone, crawling in windows...

They are everywhere, devouring all in their path. The Turks HACK WILDLY at an enemy they can't kill.

A FLEEING TURK comes face to face with Cazan.

CAZAN

I used to think there were too many
of you. Now there's not enough to
go around.

Cazan RIPS OUT the Turk's throat and drinks.

Vlad seizes Bright-Eyes, twists the scimitar out of his hand.

VLAD

Where is my son?

BRIGHT-EYES

I do not fear death.

VLAD

Everybody does. I did.

Vlad PINS Bright-Eyes to the wall with his scimitar and leaves him hanging.

Bright-Eyes squirms, can't escape. He SCREAMS as a pack of vampires TEARS into him. In the end, afraid.

IN A HOLDING CELL

The Peasant Boys chosen as future Janissaries. Among them, the RED-HAIRED BOY Vlad saved on Easter. The door OPENS...

The Boys see RED EYES and shrink back... but Vlad emerges into the LIGHT. His face cloaked in GLAMOUR.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Stay here. I'll get you back to
your mothers soon enough.

VLAD CONTINUES HIS HUNT...

Slaughter all around. Dozens of ARABIAN STALLIONS gallop past Vlad, riderless... Coming from

THE STABLE

Vlad looks in the open doors:

Mehmed slices open SACK after SACK of SILVER COINS... from wagons laden with treasure from Castle Dracula.

Hundreds of thousands of silver coins SPILL across the floor in a glittering carpet.

MEHMED

I did not tax you nearly enough.

Vlad hovers angrily. Silver. How did Mehmed know?

A mob of vampires crawls to the stable doors, hungry... But they are repelled by the silver's heat.

VLAD

Where is he?

In the GRANARY at the far end of the stable, Vlad can hear Ingeras crying from a bed of straw...

MEHMED

Waiting for you.

Vlad focuses his eyes on Mehmed's, reaching into his mind...

VLAD

Bring him here.

Mehmed squints, resisting Vlad's hypnotic stare.

MEHMED

Do you not think my will is
stronger than poor Ismail's?

Mehmed FLICKS a coin at Vlad -- Vlad CATCHES it. Lets the silver SCALD his palm, staring Mehmed down.

IN THE SKY, the black clouds churn. The silver disrupts Vlad's power...

Cazan confronts Vlad, on edge.

CAZAN

Think about what you're doing.

Vlad ignores him and steps

INTO THE STABLE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's like stepping into an oven. Vlad weathers the pain... but feels his strength sap...

IN THE SKY, cracks in the clouds. SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT break through --

Cazan watches sunlight STRIKE a group of vampires caught in the open. They BURST INTO FLAME.

Cazan bounds into the protective SHADOW of a high wall. He watches Vlad, eyes red slits...

CAZAN (CONT'D)
You never listen.

IN THE STABLE

Mehmed circles like a tiger, slicing his sword in the air...

MEHMED
Which one of us used to win these?
I don't remember...

VLAD
Yes you do. But we were boys then.

The two swordsmen THRUST simultaneously. Mehmed's sword a hair's breadth from Vlad's neck:

VLAD (CONT'D)
Close. Just like Europe.

Vlad and Mehmed COLLIDE in a clang of steel. Every trick they can remember, every dirty move they can dream up. Their COMBAT reflected in SILVER all around them...

But the longer Vlad stays here, the weaker he becomes...

Vlad DODGES -- but Mehmed was aiming at a SACK OF COINS. A cascade of SILVER dumps on Vlad. His body SEARED --

MEHMED
How long can you bear it in here?

VLAD
Long enough to tear you out of the
history books.

Vlad counter-attacks with a devastating chain of sword strokes. The onslaught forces Mehmed back...

Mehmed's SWORD is knocked away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VLAD (CONT'D)
I can still beat you as a man.

But Vlad's sword feels too heavy. He can no longer lift it.

MEHMED
You are not a man anymore.

Vlad falls. SMOLDERS on a bed of silver...

OUTSIDE, ACROSS GIURGIU

Wide swaths of SUN break through. Vampires are trapped in ever-shrinking pockets of SHADE... Emboldened Turks STAB at the cringing fiends from the safety of the sunlight...

IN THE STABLE

Mehmed picks up a WOODEN LANCE. Snaps it over his knee.

MEHMED (CONT'D)
A stake through the heart would
kill anyone. How ordinary.

Vlad pulls himself to his feet... as Mehmed THRUSTS the broken lance --

Vlad GRABS IT, barely keeping the tip from his heart --

MEHMED (CONT'D)
You fight hard for your child. You
are not your father's son.

VLAD
What do you know of my father?

Mehmed puts his weight on the lance, he and Vlad, eye to eye:

MEHMED
He was toothless and wholly lacking
in majesty... yet thought of
himself as a dragon.
(pressing forward)
When you were born they called you
"Dracula." "Son of the Dragon."
And yet I have never heard you use
that name. Why should you?
(laughs)
To be known as the son of a coward.

Vlad's strength wavers. Sharp wood TOUCHES HIS HEART...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

With a final burst of strength, Vlad pushes the spear aside and pulls Mehmed into him --

Vlad SINKS HIS FANGS into Mehmed's neck. DRINKS as Mehmed vainly struggles... Vlad's flesh HEALS.

Vlad hurls the still-living Mehmed into

THE GRANARY

Pale from blood loss, Mehmed crawls to a patch of sunlight...

As Vlad stalks toward Mehmed -- out of the silver room -- Vlad's power reasserts itself. Mehmed's protective shaft of sun FADES AWAY...

ON MEHMED. The room goes BLACK. THUNDER BOOMS.

Vlad is nothing more than pitiless red eyes. That cannot be escaped. Eyes so close they could swallow you whole.

VLAD'S VOICE

Dracula also means "Son of the Devil."

The THUNDER grows louder. Mehmed presses his palms over his ears to shut it out... Tears run down his cheeks.

MEHMED

(in a broken voice)

Stop. Stop it... Let me go...

ANGLE ON VLAD. We see it is actually quiet. Calm. There is no thunder. Vlad has his hand extended, gripping Mehmed's mind. Vlad's eyes burn into Mehmed's.

VLAD

Live in fear. For the rest of your days.

(in Turkish)

And may you be blessed with many, many days.

Mehmed, seized by nightmares, flees to a WINDOW and JUMPS INTO THE RIVER.

OUTSIDE, Turkish Boatmen fish Mehmed out of the water like flotsam.

Vlad turns to Ingeras, fussing in a bed of straw.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

VLAD (CONT'D)
Shhh... Ingeras, I'm here...

Vlad senses they're not alone:

Brother Lucian kneels in a corner, a silver PLATTER raised as a shield.

VLAD (CONT'D)
(with contempt)
You told him how to kill me.

BROTHER LUCIAN
You are the end of all things.

Vlad spies a parchment written by Lucian: a manual dedicated to Vlad's destruction.

VLAD
(reading)
What is a "vampire?"

BROTHER LUCIAN
From the Greek root "pi." "To drink." I had to devise a new name, because you've become a thing worse than the ancients could have foreseen.
(with righteous anger)
"Ekimmu" cannot hide their face and walk amongst men. They cannot enslave minds. They cannot transmute into vile beasts.
(accusing)
You changed the blood. You let it spread. You finished the Devil's work.

VLAD
I'm not a vampire. I'm the Prince.

Vlad SWATS the platter AWAY -- Lucian shuts his eyes, ready for death --

But around Brother Lucian's neck is revealed his CROSS. It GLOWS WITH WHITE LIGHT.

Vlad SHRINKS BACK... Brother Lucian is amazed, RAISES the cross. White light goes SUPERNOVA.

Vlad bends in pain -- as if an invisible stake were being twisted through his heart --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BROTHER LUCIAN

I think the boy would be safer with
me.

Brother Lucian picks up Ingeras and backs UP A CIRCULAR
STAIRCASE... Vlad follows...

ON THE TOPMOST TOWER

Brother Lucian can carry the baby no higher. Looks across
the fortress spread beneath him:

The sky is BLACK as night. The last Turks fighting vainly.
Vampires released from their prisons of shadow move like a
plague of locusts, leaving nothing living behind.

VLAD

You have nowhere left to go.

Brother Lucian holds out his cross like a torch in the dark.
Vlad keeps his distance...

BROTHER LUCIAN

I'm not afraid of you. The day I
die is the day I enter paradise.

VLAD

And if I deny you death?

The light of Brother Lucian's cross dims a bit as his faith
wavers. Vlad is able to WALK CLOSER, press his advantage...

VLAD (CONT'D)

If God were truly angry at me,
couldn't he destroy me with a
thought?

Brother Lucian doesn't have an answer... The cross FADES...

VLAD (CONT'D)

Either He isn't listening, or He
just doesn't care.

And with that, the cross' light is EXTINGUISHED in Lucian's
doubting hand.

BROTHER LUCIAN

Christ have mercy.

Vlad takes Ingeras into his arms. Brother Lucian curls in a
defeated heap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Vlad tenderly holds his son, lost in the moment. Ingeras is calmed by his father's familiar touch.

Cazan CRAWLS up the tower to Vlad.

CAZAN
The fortress is secure.

VLAD
You old goat.

CAZAN
I don't feel old.

Vlad and Cazan grasp forearms in victory.

VLAD
You're cold...

CAZAN
It must be the blood that makes
them warm.
(beat)
Did you catch the Sultan?

VLAD
He jumped in the river.

Vlad gazes across the hellish tableau that is the fortress.

VLAD (CONT'D)
How many are left?

CAZAN
(off Lucian and the baby)
The only living things here are
them.

Vampires have accumulated on the edge of the tower like vultures...

VLAD
What about the boys?

CAZAN
Boys?

IN THE HOLDING CELLS

The Transylvanian Boys taken to be Janissaries lie DEAD...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

VLAD

Feels a rush of horror. Looks around him. Vampires' mouths are fresh with BLOOD. The blood of their own sons.

Vlad looks across the river...

In the FISHING VILLAGE, Vlad's Vampire Army FEEDS. Making no distinction between Turk and Transylvanian, man or child...

VLAD

Stop this.

CAZAN

We obey our Prince in all things...
Except matters pertaining to blood.

More and more vampires CLIMB the walls... All sniffing out blood. All drawn to the infant child in Vlad's arms...

CAZAN (CONT'D)

What have I taught you? What have
I repeated over and over since you
were a boy? All that matters is a
Prince's duty to his people.

Cazan rivets his RED EYES on Vlad's son:

CAZAN (CONT'D)

Don't you realize? They're all our
enemies now.

An Eager Vampire LUNGES at Ingeras --

Vlad grabs a discarded SPEAR, JAMS it into the vampire.

VLAD

Know your place.

Vlad SNAPS off the metal point in the vampire's chest -- then drives the broken wood THROUGH its HEART --

The vampire VAPORIZES.

Vlad HANDS INGERAS to Lucian, who holds the infant close. Vlad swings the lance around, guards them with his body.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Stay away from my son.

CAZAN

When he's gone, you'll be free.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

Cazan POUNCES. Vlad THRUSTS his broken spear at Cazan --

Cazan SPLINTERS it with his fist. Grabs Vlad by the throat... Vlad and Cazan WRESTLE in a titanic struggle...

CAZAN (CONT'D)
Love will lead you to ruin.

Locked in combat, Vlad's eyes meet Cazan's.

VLAD
You forget who I am.

Vlad grabs a discarded scimitar and CHOPS OFF CAZAN'S ARM --

Vlad kicks Cazan OFF THE TOWER --

Cazan tries transforming into a bat, but one-winged, corkscrews down. Plunges INTO THE DANUBE.

The water TEARS CAZAN TO PIECES and sinks him to hell.

ON THE TOWER

A mass of vampires CONVERGE... Vlad fights them off with broken spears until he's thick with their dust...

But Vlad realizes he can't stop them all.

Vlad RAISES his hands, power coursing through them:

VLAD (CONT'D)
The war is over.

Vlad commands the clouds to EVAPORATE. DAYLIGHT punches through --

The vampires surrounding Brother Lucian and Ingeras BURST INTO FLAME. Lucian shelters the baby from the heat --

IN THE FISHING VILLAGE

The Peasants find themselves chased only by ASHES... blowing harmlessly past and into nothingness...

The Boyar "pallbearers" lie dead around VLAD'S COFFIN. The coffin lid cracks open... It's Simion, hiding inside. He emerges into the new day, bewildered...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

ON A TURKISH SHIP

Mehmed watches bats fall as burning EMBERS... but he cannot shake free of the fear that poisons him.

ON THE TOWER

Vlad holds himself together a moment longer, through sheer will... The sun cutting through a sky choked with ash...

VLAD (CONT'D)
(to Brother Lucian)
Look after him. He's the Prince.

As Vlad reaches out to touch his son, he falls to ASH. Ashes that are carried away by the wind...

Lucian tries his best to soothe the child crying in his arms.

SURVIVORS

Fall to their knees, Turk and Transylvanian alike. Simply grateful to see the sun once more.

General Omer prays facing southeast, giving thanks to God.

SIMION "THE WISE"

Watches a RIBBON OF ASHES swirl toward him... pulled inexorably into the dirt of Vlad's coffin.

Vlad's ashes have found their resting place. For now.

Simion reverently closes the lid. Eyes shining with madness.

SIMION "THE WISE"
Sleep Prince... and dream of the
night you return to us.

Simion wrestles Vlad's coffin onto a wagon and bears it away to one of the many dark corners of Transylvania.

EXT. HIGH TOWER - GIURGIU FORTRESS - LATER

Brother Lucian holds baby Ingeras... Watching the Turkish ships TURN BACK to Istanbul.

We hear INGERAS' VOICE, now a boy of twelve.

INGERAS (V.O.)
Prince Vlad Dracula was a hero.

EXT. MEHMED'S SHIP - DAY

In Mehmed's face, we see something greater than defeat.

INGERAS (V.O.)
Mehmed never again set foot in
Transylvania. Or ever reached the
glittering capitals of Europe.

EXT. PEASANT FARM - SUNSET

The SETTING SUN dips to fields of grain...

INGERAS (V.O.)
Our land was at peace. We no
longer had the Turk to fear.

However, a Peasant Farmer nervously shoos his children into the house. We see a CROSS newly carved into the door...

INT. THRONE ROOM - CASTLE DRACULA - NIGHT

TWELVE YEAR-OLD INGERAS sits on the THRONE. His feet can't reach the ground. He's attended by an older Brother Lucian.

Assembled BOYARS swear allegiance on bended-knee.

INGERAS (V.O.)
I know my father loved me very
much...

Ingeras thoughtfully touches the SILVER CRUCIFIX around his neck... as he looks out the window, into the night.

INGERAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But I pray I never meet him.

THE END