Vlad

by

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Sometimes the man is greater than the myth.

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

Over this runs script.

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

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

This fraternity called themselves the Order of the Dragon.

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

INT. PRINCE’S BED CHAMBERS, CASTLE – NIGHT

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

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

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

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

VLAD
Why are you dressed for battle?

DRACUL
The Ottoman are here.

This sends a shiver down Vlad’s spine.

DRACUL (CONT’D)
We are prepared for them. Never before has the Sultan encountered a force the likes of the Dragon he faces now. And never again will he.
Vlad holds his father’s gaze, awed by his intensity.

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

VLAD
I will.

Dracul kisses his son and turns to leave.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Be careful, father.

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

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

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

DRACUL
What are you talking about?

BOGDAN
We’re the only ones here!
DRACUL
We took an oath, they’ll be here.

BOGDAN
Just in time to bury us.

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

DRACUL
They’ll be here.

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

EXT. MOUNTAINS, WALLACHIA – DAY

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

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

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

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

RADU
How big is the Ottoman army?

STEPHEN
Massive. Bigger than all the Dragon armies combined.

Vlad shoots Stephen a disapproving look.

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

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

STEPHEN
What are you doing?
VLAD
Any fool can shoot an eagle. To
catch one alive takes real skill.

STEPHEN
And you think you can?

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

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

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

STEPHEN
Show off.

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

VLAD
You two are going to have to jump
down here.

STEPHEN
Are you mad? I’m not jumping that.

VLAD
I can’t get back up there.

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

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

VLAD
You see? It’s easy. Radu can do it.

Stephen is embarrassed but he cannot force himself to jump.

STEPHEN
I’m going back to the castle.

VLAD
Do you know the way? Stephen?
Stephen disappears without answering. Vlad and Radu share a guilty smile.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Nice jump.

RADU
Thanks.

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

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

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

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

The grim reality of this ripples through the crowd.

DRACUL
How many men have you brought?

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

BOGDAN
You worthless coward bastard! You assembled this coalition.

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

DRACUL
This is my country!
Dracul grabs Hunyadi, ready to throttle him. Bogdan separates them.

**DRACUL (CONT’D)**
Damn you to hell, Hunyadi. Leave now if you did not come to fight. You are no longer welcome here.

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

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

**DRACUL**
Cazan. Raise the white flag.

**BOGDAN**
You’re surrendering?

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

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

**DRACUL (CONT’D)**
Stay here until after I have negotiated with the Sultan. If I am killed or taken prisoner, Francesca and the boys should go back to Moldavia with you.

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

**VOICE O.S.**
You cannot defeat me!

**EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA – DAY**

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

Suddenly all attention is drawn to a party of horsemen who thunder past, riding towards the castle. Bogdan leads them.
STEPHEN
It’s my father.

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

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE - DAY

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

VLAD
What happened? Has father been killed?

Francesca crosses to Vlad, embracing him tightly.

FRANCESCA
Your father is fine.

VLAD
Where is he?

BOGDAN
Waiting for you.

FRANCESCA
He’s not taking them!

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

VLAD
What happened Cazan?

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

VLAD
We are to be Ottoman prisoners?

FRANCESCA
No!

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

VLAD
When do we leave?
EXT. WALLACHIAN SHIP, DANUBE - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

MURAD
As long as our friendship lives, so
shall they.

Dracul mounts his horse, riding down to the Danube.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, BULGARIA - DAY

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

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

VLAD
How long are we to be prisoners?

DRACUL
Watch your tone with me.

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

DRACUL (CONT’D)
Life is hard Vlad, how you deal
with adversity determines what kind
of man you are. As kings we must be
great men. This is your first duty
as prince of Wallachia, I want you
to put it to good use.
VLAD
How can I be of any use here?

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

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

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

VLAD
I will look after him.

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

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

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

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

INT. SULTAN’S CARRIAGE, BULGARIA - DAY

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

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

Vlad ignores him, keeping his attention routed to the window.
INT. SULTAN’S CARRIAGE, CITY OF ADRIANOPLE - NIGHT

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

INT. DRAWING ROOM, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

    VLAD
    Very different.

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

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

Murad signals to a GUARD.

    MURAD (CONT’D)
    Show them to their quarters.

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

    MURAD (CONT’D)
    In our culture it is customary to
    bow to your Sultan when you enter
    and leave his presence.

Radu bows but Vlad does not.
VLAD
In our culture a king bows only to God.

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

MURAD
He will come around.

INT. PRINCE’S CHAMBERS, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE – NIGHT

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

VLAD
You can choose cots.

RADU
Can I sleep with you?

VLAD
Just for tonight.

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
Don’t bow to the Sultan again. We are political prisoners, not his subjects.

RADU
Father did.

VLAD
Just do as I say, Radu.

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

INT. CLASSROOM, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE – DAY

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

Levent points to a fortification next to a river.
LEVENT
Semna in Egypt, army estimated at twenty thousand. Who wants to start?

Mohammed nods, this is clearly his favorite subject.

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

LEVENT
Aggressive but is it efficient?

MOHAMMED
Conquering a fortress in one day is fairly efficient.

Mohammed’s entourage laugh.

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

Levent smiles, a lifelong soldier.

LEVENT
Elaborate.

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

LEVENT
What would you do?

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

MOHAMMED
That would take months.
VLAD
It takes years to raise soldiers.
Plus this way you don’t destroy the
building you are trying to acquire.

The class laugh, Mohammed does not.

LEVENT
Good work, Vlad.

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

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

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

EXT. PALACE GARDENS, ADRIANOPLE – DAY

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

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

RADU
Ride horses, hunt eagles.

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

OLDER BOY
Medeniyete hosgeldiniz! Do you
speak any Turkish?
(Radu shakes his head)
That means welcome to civilization.

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

OLDER BOY (CONT’D)
(Noticing Radu’s crucifix)
I see you know Jesus, do you know
Mohammed?

Radu nods, pointing to Mohammed. Raucous laughter. Vlad is
getting annoyed and moves into earshot.
OLDER BOY (CONT’D)
I meant the prophet Mohammed.

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

MOHAMMED
There were twenty-five prophets, Radu. Adam, Noah, Moses, Solomon, Jesus. You have heard of these men?
(Radu nods)
The final prophet was a man called Mohammed. He spoke directly to Allah, to God. Then he wrote a book called the Koran about the things Allah told him.

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

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

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

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

MOHAMMED (CONT’D)
You will soon realize you are not my equal. My father is a legend, yours is an ordinary coward.

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

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

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
You know what we did in Wallachia? Learnt how to fight.

RADU
Don’t Vlad.
Too late, SLASH. Vlad brings the knife down across Mohammed’s face, sending the young Sultan to his knees. Everyone is shocked silent. Vlad drops the knife as guards rush in.

EXT. TRAINING YARD, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE – DAY

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

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

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

    MURAD (CONT’D)
    Stand up and bow to me.

Again Vlad stands and again he does not bow.

    VLAD
    I bow only to God.

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

    VLAD
    I am not your subject.

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

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

Vlad leaps forward, straining against his binds.

    VLAD
    Stay away from my brother.

Murad smiles, nodding to his general.

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

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

MURAD (CONT’D)
You will learn.

INT. PRINCES CELL, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

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

VLAD
Where are you taking him?

LEVENT
The Sultan has ordered for you to be separated.

Vlad tries to approach his brother, Levent restrains him.

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

Radu is upset seeing his brother’s condition.

RADU
What happened to your back?

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

The guards hustle Radu away, Vlad calling after him.

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

Levent pushes Vlad into his cell.

LEVENT
If you keep this up you will be dead before winter.
VLAD
Go to hell.

LEVENT
I am trying to help you, Vlad.

VLAD
By lashing me?

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

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

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

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

EXT. COMBAT TRAINING FACILITY, PALACE, ADRIANOPEL - DAY

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

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

VLAD
You learn that line in the whore house?

Levent grins and they cross to their canteens to drink.

VLAD (CONT’D)
What new whispers from Europe?
I meant what I said, I am not telling you any more news.

Vlad drinks, never taking his eyes off Levent.

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

Then you should learn to tow the line.

Levent holds out for a moment longer before relenting.

King Ladislas of Poland joined the Dragon Order.

How old is he?

Eighteen.

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

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

I have to get out of here.

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

When will that be?

When the Sultan releases you.

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

You know Vlad, you would do well to copy your brother Radu’s example.
As intended, this gets a rise out of Vlad.

    VLAD
    I’m going to kill you old man.

And they are fighting again.

INT. PALACE ARENA, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

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

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

    MOHAMMED
    Always the showman.

    RADU
    Just giving the crowd what they want.

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

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

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

    MOHAMMED
    She asked the same thing about you.

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

    MOHAMMED (CONT’D)
    You’re pathetic.

The boys continue on their way, laughing as they go.
INT. VLAD’S CELL, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE – DAY

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

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

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

    VLAD
    I wish to see my brother.

    GUARD
    You have to get permission.

    VLAD
    (Tossing him the coin)
    Now.

INT. RADU’S CHAMBER, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE – DAY

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

    VLAD
    I wish to see him in private.

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

    RADU
    Good morning brother.

    VLAD
    Did you sleep well last night?

Radu smiles, realizing he’s caught.

    RADU
    How did you know?

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

    RADU
    It’s just harmless fun.
VLAD
You have to be smarter than this. What if the Sultan catches you? There will be hell to pay.

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

But Vlad cannot drop it.

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

RADU
Since when have you been a paragon of good behavior?

VLAD
I’m serious, Radu. You cannot court her.

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

RADU
Okay, I will put an end to it.

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

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

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

VLAD
What?

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

VLAD
What? What the hell is going on?

Levent is loath to deliver the news.

LEVENT
Europe has declared crusade.
EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

INT. WAR TENT, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

LADISLAS
I am giving you back your country.

DRACUL
And murdering my sons!

Ambassador of Rome, CARDINAL CESARININ stands.

CESARININ
A parent losing a child is the greatest tragedy man endures, you will not be alone in your despair. But it is imperative we fight, for the freedom of Europe and for the Gospel of Christ.
HUNYADI
I am sorry for you loss Dracul, but we are strong and God wills it. We Crusade.

EXT. WAR TENT, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY
Dracul storms from the tent, joining Cazan.

DRACUL
There is no stopping this.

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

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

INT. CELL, PRISON, ADRIANOPLE - DAY
Vlad and Radu sit in a cramped cell. A key jams into the lock making them both jump and the door opens to reveal Sofia. Radu leaps to embrace her.

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

RADU
We're fine. What is going on?

SOFIA
Mohammed has gone with father to fight the Christian armies.

VLAD
You have to get us out of here.

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

VLAD
Our lives depend on it.

SOFIA
I spoke with Mohammed, he swore he would let no harm come to you.
VLAD
This is bigger than childish friendships! The Christian army could only have invaded from Wallachia, our function here was to safeguard against that. Your father has to kill us now, do you understand that Sofia?

RADU
Enough, Vlad.

The guard enters, annoyed by the commotion.

SOFIA
I swear I will let nothing happen to you.

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

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

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

Stale mate. They return to sitting in silence.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE, BULGARIA - DAY

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

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

MURAD
What would you suggest we do?

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

Murad appraises his son with mild contempt.
MURAD
If you spent less time gambling and fucking, you might make a better Sultan. We let our men rest, make the Crusaders come to us.

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

EXT. BATTLE FIELD, BULGARIA - DAY

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

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

INT. WAR ROOM, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

CAZAN
It was a disaster, they annihilated us.

EXT. CITY OF VARNA, BULGARIA - FLASHBACK

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

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

EXT. BATTLE FIELD, BULGARIA - FLASHBACK

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

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

Hunyadi signals and the WHITE FLAG is raised.
EXT. SMALL SAIL BOAT, DANUBE - FLASHBACK

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

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

INT. SULTAN’S WAR TENT, BULGARIA - DAY

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

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

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

INT. WAR ROOM, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Dracul broods darkly, pondering his next move.

CAZAN
What would you have me do?

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

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

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

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

Many of the council rap on the table, supporting Wladislav.
DRACUL
Hunyadi engineered a disaster for Europe, they will not intervene. He claims he is willing to give his life for this cause, then I will gladly trade it for my children's.

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

This sucks the air out of the room.

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

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

INT. CELL, PRISON, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

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

GUARD
Out, both of you.

VLAD
Where are you taking us?

GUARD
(Nasty smile.)
You’ll see.

INT. DUNGEON, PRISON, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

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

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

RADU
You terrified us Levent.

Levent hurries over to the door, bolting it shut.

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

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

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

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

VLAD
What are you doing? Let’s go.

RADU
I’m not coming.

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

RADU
I don’t believe that.

Vlad is floored, tries to remain calm.

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

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

VLAD
Because of her? We have a chance to be with our family.
RADU
I barely remember them. All I know is that they left us here for ten years without even a single letter, then participated in this Crusade.

Vlad slaps his brother.

VLAD
Our parents always loved us, the rest is politics.

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

LEVENT
We have to go, now.

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

Radu embraces his brother tightly, kissing his cheek.

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

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

EXT. MOUNTAINS, BULGARIA - DAY

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

EXT. MOUNTAINS, BULGARIA - DAY

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

INT. MANNER HOUSE, TRANSILVANIA - NIGHT

Wladislav waits in an OPULENT DRAWING ROOM. Hunyadi enters, intrigued by this unexpected visit.
EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, BULGARIA – NIGHT

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

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA – DAWN

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

EXT. CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA – DAY

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

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE – DAY

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

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

Cazan embraces his old friend and reluctantly slips out.

EXT. PORT OF TURNU, WALLACHIA – DAY

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

VLAD
I had no idea it would be so bad.

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

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

Wladislav takes Francesca by the hair, pulling her close.

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

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

EXT. TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

Vlad
What do you mean slain?

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

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

Vlad absorbs this, staring up at the surrounding hills. Disbelief, fear, then panic setting in.
VLAD
Oh my God, no.

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

LEVENT
We’re leaving.

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

LEVENT (CONT’D)
Vlad, you will have your revenge, but not today. Get on your horse, now!

Reluctantly Vlad complies and they gallop from the township.

EXT. BANK OF THE RIVER OLT, WALLACHIA - DUSK

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

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

VLAD
We can both make it.

LEVENT
They will reach us.

VLAD
Then we will both fight.

THREE HUNDRED FEET.

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

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

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

EXT. GROVE OF TREES, RIVER BANK - NIGHT

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

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

CAZAN

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

VLAD

It’s a long story.

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

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

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

CAZAN

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

Vlad takes all of this in.

VLAD

Did he talk about us? Radu and I?
CAZAN
Everyday. He was never the same
after you left. Everyone blames him
for the treaty but he suffered more
than anyone.

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

CAZAN (CONT’D)
These belong to you now. Your
father entrusted me with them as
the castle fell.

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

CAZAN (CONT’D)
Sword of Wallachia, official symbol
of Wallachian rule.

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

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

CAZAN
I will do all that I can to help.

Vlad nods his appreciation

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

Off Cazan’s look of askew...

EXT. HILLS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE – NIGHT

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

Cazan cannot bear to look as they pry the lid open with their
swords.
Vlad illuminates the contents with his torch, reeling back from the sight within. The lid is a patchwork of claw marks. His mother’s throat slit, his father was BURIED ALIVE.

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

EXT. HILLS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE - LATER

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

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - CONTINUOUS

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

    WLADISLAV
    Guards!

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

EXT. HILLS ABOVE TIRGOVISTE - DAWN

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

EXT. COUNTRY CHAPEL, WALLACHIA - DAWN

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

    CAZAN
    We should go.

EXT. CAZAN’S HOUSE - DAY

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

EXT. CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, WALLACHIA - DAY

Once again Vlad is on top of the world, making his way on foot across the CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS towards MOLDAVIA.
INT. MURAD’S STUDY, PALACE, ADRIANOPOLE - DAY

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

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

    MOHAMMED
    I am sorry for your loss, Radu.

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

    MURAD
    You will always have a family here with us.

Radu nods his appreciation and the three men sit.

    MURAD (CONT’D)
    I must apologize for your brief imprisonment and I thank you for your loyalty. Know that you were never in danger.

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

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

Radu is shocked.

    MURAD (CONT’D)
    King Wladislaw has declared independence from my empire. You will replace him, ruling under the treaty negotiated by your father.

    RADU
    Vlad has claim before I.

    MURAD
    Vlad is gone. Besides, I doubt I could trust him to honor our terms.
MOHAMMED
You will be the better king, Radu.

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

Radu flushes under the wry stare of Murad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXT. CITY OF SUCEAVA, MOLDAVIA – DAY

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

CAPTAIN
Can I help you?

VLAD
I was curious why the flag flies half mast.
CAPTAIN
King Bogdan is dead Sir. What is your business here?

Vlad is shocked, trying to cover.

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

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

INT. TAVERN, SUCEAVA, MOLDAVIA – DAY

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

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

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

CAPTAIN
I know you are no farmer.

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

VLAD
You better make your point.

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

VLAD
How did you know who I was?

CAPTAIN
I caught a glimpse of your dragon pendant. Stephen hides in the forest, I can take you to him.
Vlad sits back, appraising this man and his offer.

**VLAD**
How long have you been in his service?

**CAPTAIN**
I trained him as a child.

**VLAD**
What did he tell you about me?

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

Vlad half smiles, slightly closer to trusting this man.

**EXT. FORREST, MOLDAVIA - DUSK**

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

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

**VLAD**
If this is a trap, I’m going to kill you first.

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

**CAPTAIN**
Look.

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

**STEPHEN**
It’s been a long time little cousin.

**EXT. CAVE, FORREST, MOLDAVIA - NIGHT**

Vlad and Stephen sit by a fire sharing a ROAST HARE and a JUG OF PALINCA. Stephen too wears his father’s Dragon pendant.
STEPHEN
My uncle had always wanted the throne. The Ottoman treaty was the opportunity he had been waiting for. Murdered him in his sleep, I barley escaped.

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

Vlad gazes at his dragon pendant, scrutinizing the insignia.

VLAD (CONT’D)
This is why the Dragon Order was originally founded. Look at the insignia, the all powerful dragon is being choked by its own tail.

The fire reflects off of the chocking dragon.

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

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

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

STEPHEN
What if it leads to our deaths?

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

Vlad puts out his hand, the fire now reflecting in his eyes.
VLAD (CONT’D)
Join me brother and together we
will free the Dragon.

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

STEPHEN
You always were a crazy bastard.

As they clasp hands, MUSLIM PRAYER WAILS OUT.

INT. MOSQUE, ADRIANOPLE – DAY

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

INT. SOFIA’S CHAMBER, PALACE, ADRIANOPLE – NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

Radu is shocked to find himself included in these plans.

RADU
I want no part in that.
MOHAMMED
This is inevitable, Radu.
Constantinople stands on a small
piece of land, surrounded for
hundreds of miles by my empire.
They know they are beaten.

RADU
Then what do you want from me?

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

RADU
And if they do not surrender?

MOHAMMED
Then we take it by force.

Radu remains reluctant.

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

RADU
There is still no word from Vlad?

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

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

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

EXT. WALLACHIA, NARROW FOREST ROAD - DAWN

Cold misty morning. A party of TRANSYLVANIAN MERCHANTS make
their descent into Wallachia, their carts weighed down with
merchandise. All movement stops as they encounter a fallen
tree obstructing the path. A FAT MERCHANT kicks his laborer.
FAT MERCHANT
Don’t just stand there, start cutting.

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

VOICE O.S
Why don’t you cut it fat man?

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

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

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
You’re on your way to Tirgoviste?

LABORER
Yes Sir.

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

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

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

EXT. WALLACHIA, MOUNTAIN PASS - NIGHT

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

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

Then flaming arrows slam into the ground igniting lines of oil soaked straw. Walls of flames shoot up, trapping the merchants. When the flames die, Vlad and his men have once again surrounded them. Vlad addresses the head mercenary.
VLAD
Each of these merchants has a pouch of gold, bring them to me.

The mercenary does as commanded. The merchants are livid.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Have you been paid yet for your services?

MERCENARY
No sir.

Vlad empties out a dozen gold ducats into his hand.

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

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

INT. STABLES, MANOR HOUSE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

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

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

VLAD
That’s my horse.

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

WOMAN
You don’t look like Lord of the Manor.

VLAD
I’m not, I was about to steal it.

WOMAN
Then you should have been quicker, he’s mine now.
The horse wakes, noisily getting to its feet. The woman gently soothes him, effortlessly throwing a saddle onto his back. Vlad watches her, enamored by her brass and beauty.

WOMAN (CONT’D)
I ride bareback but this saddle will fetch a few coins in the market.

VLAD
Where are you from?

WOMAN
Here today, somewhere else tomorrow.

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

WOMAN (CONT’D)
It’s not a good idea to wait around here too long. I thank you for the horse.

VLAD
You’re welcome. Tell me your name.

WOMAN
Eleanor.

VLAD
I’m Vlad.

ELEANOR
It’s been a pleasure.

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

VLAD
Wake up.

EXT. SOUTHERN PLAINS, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

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

ELEANOR O.S.
Are you following me?

Eleanor emerges from the trees.
VLAD
I thought we could ride together a while, talk a little.

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

VLAD
You will be safe with me.

ELEANOR
It’s not me that I’m worried about.

Vlad smiles, trotting in next to her.

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

ELEANOR
Some people call us that, we prefer Travelers.

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

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

VLAD
Steal whatever you want.

ELEANOR
Only what we need.

VLAD
It sounds like a great life.

ELEANOR
It is compared to how most people live nowadays.

VLAD
That will all soon change.

Eleanor is intrigued by this odd man. His playfulness juxtaposed by a dark gravitas.
ELEANOR
What is your story?

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

ELEANOR
We don’t talk about our family.

Vlad nods, respecting her code.

VLAD
Were you born into that life?

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

VLAD
Why did you leave?

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

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

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

VLAD
Victim of circumstance.

ELEANOR
Spoken like a true criminal. Where?

VLAD
(Loath to say)
Adrianople.

Eleanor looks at Vlad, surprise turning to realization.

ELEANOR
Prince Vlad?

VLAD
At your service.
Eleanor’s demeanor abruptly changes, turning cold.

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

And she spurs her horse, galloping away.

**EXT. GYPSY CAMPSITE, FOREST, WALLACHIA – DAY**

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

**VLAD**
I come here with an offer.

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

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

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

**VLAD**
Who are you?

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

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

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

**CALIN**
That’s a lot of gold.
(His men laugh)
(MORE)
If we want gold, we can rob the treasury. Why should we help you?

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

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

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

CALIN
What will you do when the Ottoman return?

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

Eleanor calls over the crowd.

ELEANOR
And how will you do that?

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

CALIN
The noblemen will go to war.

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

Calin regards Vlad, intrigued.

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

Vlad nods, following Calin through the crowd. As he passes Eleanor he gives her a wink. Her friend watches with a grin.
GYPSY GIRL
He’s a lively lad. You didn’t tell me he was handsome.

ELEANOR
I didn’t notice.

Bullshit. The girls watch him go.

EXT. GYPSY CAMPSITE, FOREST, WALLACHIA - DAY
Vlad sits with Calin and his generals. They pass a bottle of Palinca.

CALIN
When would you want to move?

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

CALIN
I already have a couple of men in the castle.
(Off of Vlad’s surprise)
I told you, I was going to rob the treasury.

His men laugh.

VLAD
Gypsy bastards.

More laughter. Calin regards Vlad evenly.

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

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

Now it is Vlad who challenges Calin.

VLAD (CONT’D)
But if we do this, there is no turning back. It will be a rough road, I need to know you will be there with me to ride it out.
CALIN
I didn’t get this pretty being afraid of a fight and if I give you my word, it’s final.

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

CALIN (CONT’D)
Looks like you got your soldiers.

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

EXT. GYPSY CAMPSITE, FOREST - DAY

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

VLAD
I was looking for you.

ELEANOR
You have a lot of nerve following me here.

VLAD
I wanted to see you again.

ELEANOR
You wanted soldiers.

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

ELEANOR
I am not usually that fond of noblemen.

VLAD
We have that in common.

Vlad smiles but Eleanor has not come to banter.

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

Vlad feels the weight of responsibility.
ELEANOR (CONT’D)
I am responsible for bringing you here. Don’t let us down, do the things you say you will do.

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

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

VLAD
I will not forget anything, least of all you.

Eleanor bluses at the declaration.

VLAD (CONT’D)
And if it be your will, I will personally bring to justice the men that killed your family.

ELEANOR
Calin killed them years ago. Calin is my brother.

Vlad is further struck by the serendipity of their meeting.

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

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

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

EXT. ROAD TO CONSTANTINOPLE – DAY

Radu approaches Constantinople, the oldest and wealthiest city in Europe. Thousands of Ottoman soldiers are setting up camp around the city walls.
INT. GRAND MEETING ROOM, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

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

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

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

CONSTANTINE.
Please join us. This is our Archbishop, Edmund.

Edmund nods a cold welcome as Radu sits. Silence.

CONSTANTINE. (CONT'D)
Well, we all know why we are here. What is his offer?

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

Edmund whispers angrily into Constantine’s ear.

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

EDMUND
(Enraged)
You come here and presume you can dictate what is best for God’s city? You do the devil’s bidding, you should not even be permitted on these hallow grounds.
Constantine stands, cutting Edmund off.

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

EXT. BALCONY, CONSTANTINOPLE – DAY

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

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

Constantine lets that sit as they gaze over the city.

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

Radu is racked with guilt. Constantine magnanimous.

CONSTANTINE (CONT’D)
I do not condemn you Radu, you are just misguided. Tell your Sultan my answer is no.

Beyond the city walls, the formidable Ottoman army wait.

EXT. CITY WALLS, CONSTANTINOPLE- DAWN

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

MOHAMMED
I did not think you would come.

RADU
I tried not to.

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

EXT. BALCONY OF ST. SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAWN

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

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

EXT. CITY STREETS, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

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

EXT. CITY WALLS, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

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

EXT. CITY STREETS, CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

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

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

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

EXT. ROAD TO CONSTANTINOPLE - DAY

Radu gallops away from Constantinople. Slowing for a moment, he looks back to the city before spurring his horse on.
EXT. TOWN SQUARE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

CALIN
Just you wait boys, just you wait.

EXT. FOREST, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

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

The atmosphere is electric.

CALIN (CONT’D)
Bad news is Constantinople fell a week hence. Mohammed has proclaimed himself Caesar, Muslim emperor of all Christians.

This causes outrage amongst the men.

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

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

This takes Vlad off guard.

STEPHEN
The martyr killed by the traitor, poetic.

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

VLAD
Eat and rest, we have a long night ahead of us.
EXT. TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

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

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

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

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

    CALIN
    I’ll get him.

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

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

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

Wladislav dives up and begins dressing, his wife panicked.

    WLAGISLAV
    You stay here.

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

Wladislav runs for the door but Vlad beats him to it, slamming the smaller man into the solid oak. He drops to the floor where Vlad pins him with a foot to the throat.
VLAD
(To Wladislav’s wife)
You might not want to watch this.

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

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

Vlad backhands Wladislav, sending him to the ground again.

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. TIRGOVISTE, CASTLE, CHAPEL - DAWN

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

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

VLAD
I do.
The priest steps forward holding the crown.

PRIEST
By what name do you choose to be known?

VLAD
Vlad Dracula, son of the Dragon.

PRIEST
Rise King Dracula. Long live the king.

TERRIFIED COUNCIL
Long live the king.

Vlad looks to the nobleman, their forboding is palpable.

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

EXT. TIRGOVISTE, TOWN SQUARE - DAY

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

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

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

The crowd listen, Vlad finding his groove.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. WAR ROOM, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

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

Welcome to my court.

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

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

VLAD
I just did.

Another of the noblemen now stands.

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

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

But you do not govern. You bicker and scheme about how best to enrich yourselves while the country rots and the people starve.
GALES
The people starve because your father ruined us.

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

VLAD
What is your name, Sir?

GALES
Gales of Severin, your highness.

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

Vlad turns back to the council.

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

Vlad stands, calling the meeting to a close.

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

The noblemen quickly exit, only Gales lingers.

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

VLAD
I’ll manage.

GALES
We’ll see.

Gales lets the threat sit for a moment before leaving with a curt nod. Vlad turns to Calin with a grin.
VLAD
I think that went well.

CALIN
They loved you mate.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

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

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

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

STEPHEN
Then all opposition beware.

Calin stumbles over, lifting his bottle in the toast.

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

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

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

Calin smiles, genuinely moved.

CALIN
Very generous, thank you.

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

They drink the toast, enjoying the victory and alcohol. Vlad turns to Calin with a sly grin.
VLAD (CONT’D)
I have one more favour to ask of you. With your permission I would like to court Eleanor.

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

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

Vlad agrees with a nod.

EXT. PALACE GARDENS, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

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

SOFIA
Mohammed is back.

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

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

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

RADU
Did I catch you at a bad time?

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

Mohammed offers Radu a chair and they sit.

MOHAMMED (CONT’D)
You left Constantinople so quickly.

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

MOHAMMED
And how do you feel now?
RADU
The same. I am equal parts of two things that are determined to destroy each other. I am too involved in both to fight for either.

MOHAMMED
So you must fight for both.

RADU
Clearly that is not possible.

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

RADU
Do not talk to me in riddles, Mohammed.

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

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

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

RADU
I was not.

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

MOHAMMED
So what will you do?
RADU
Live a simple life, not prince nor politician, just a husband and father. But I would still ask for Sofia’s hand.

MOHAMMED
I had hoped you would be such an asset in Europe. (Nodding his consent) You will have to convert to Islam. Sofia is still an Ottoman Princess, your children must be born of pure blood.

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

EXT. CAMPSITE, MOUNTAIN PLAIN, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

EXT. CAMPSITE, MOUNTAIN PLAIN, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

VLAD
Eleanor.

Eleanor spins, embarrassed but clearly delighted to see him.

ELEANOR
I was skinning rabbits.
VLAD
You look beautiful.

She rolls her eyes, playing it cool.

ELEANOR
Congratulations, so now you are king.

VLAD
And already all taxes have been cut.

Eleanor smiles, giving him his due.

ELEANOR
What are you doing back here?

VLAD
I came to get you.

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

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

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

ELEANOR
He’s incredible, thank you.

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

EXT. LAKE CLEARING, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

ELEANOR
Were you injured?

VLAD
No, I just haven’t ridden bare back in a while.
Vlad takes long strides stretching his legs. Eleanor laughs, he looks like an idiot.

VLAD (CONT’D)
This is a nice place.

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

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

Eleanor is momentarily taken aback.

ELEANOR
You are very direct aren’t you?

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

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

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

Eleanor smiles at the clumsy proposal.

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

VLAD
Everything.

Vlad takes her hands, facing her with total conviction.

VLAD (CONT’D)
And I know everything that I need to about you. You are strong and clever and beautiful and you care for this country. And most importantly I know that I love you.
Eleanor is flushed, she wants to say yes.

VLAD (CONT’D)
A king is only as strong as his queen, I need you. Marry me.

ELEANOR
I need to think about it, Vlad.

VLAD
No you don’t.

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
Marry me.

INT. CHURCH, TIRGOVISTE, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

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

Vlad kisses his bride, never happier.

INT. MOSQUE, ADRIANOPLE - DAY

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

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

RADU
I do.

Radu kisses his bride, never happier.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Eleanor’s eyes are closed as Vlad carries her over the threshold of their bedchambers.
When she opens them she sees that hundreds of candles line every surface. Slowly they unwrap one another’s robes.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

INT. TURKISH VILLA, ANTALYA, TURKEY - DAY

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

SOFIA
We are going to be very happy here.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

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

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

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

Calin salutes Vlad as they file out of the courtyard.

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

NOBLEMEN
We have always taxed our tenants. When you die, which I am sure will be very soon, we will continue exactly where we stopped.
By the time you get out of prison, you will have no land left to tax.

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

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

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

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

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

Hello uncle.

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

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

You’re doing very well, Vlad. The people have never been happier. Just be careful with the noblemen.
VLAD
Soon there will be no noblemen and Wallachia will be a far better place without them.

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

Vlad nods, appreciating the concern.

INT. CELL, PRISON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY
Gales sits with the three imprisoned noblemen.

NOBLEMEN
You have to get us out of here, Gales.

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

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

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

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE, HUNGARY - DAY
A YOUNG MONK comes to the door of his MONASTERY where Gales waits with an ATTRACTIVE OLDER WOMAN.

THE MONK
Hello mother, I was not expecting you.

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

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

THE MONK
It is honor to meet you sir, please come in.
The Monk steps aside and Gales enters the monastery.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

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

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

VLAD
About two hours.

ELEANOR
You’re an idiot.

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

VLAD
Stephen took Moldavia, Calin is fine.

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

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

Eleanor smiles coyly, leaning down to kiss Vlad again.

ELEANOR
Maybe we go for a walk in an hour.

EXT. LAKE, TIRGOVISTE HILLS, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

ELEANOR
I thought you were going to take me to the black sea.
VLAD
Next month, I cannot leave now.

ELEANOR
I heard that months ago. Remember when you used to romance me?
(Mimicking him)
I’ll take you everywhere you’ve ever wanted to go. Remember that?

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

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
I could catch an eagle with my bare hands when I was a child.

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

VLAD
Just like our sons will be.

ELEANOR
You’re so sure I will give you boys?

VLAD
Someone will.

ELEANOR
(Mock outrage)
And I will kill you while you sleep.

SPLASH. Something disrupts the water behind them.

ELEANOR (CONT’D)
What was that?

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

VLAD
Assassin!

He snaps off Eleanor’s arrow and pushes her into the lake.
VLAD (CONT’D)
Get under the water, swim out to the middle.

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

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

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
Who sent you? You can die in peace or in terrible pain. It makes no difference now if you tell me. Who sent you?

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
I’m going to cut out your tongue and leave you here to die unless you tell me who sent you.

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
Don’t make me do this, just tell me who sent you.

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

VLAD
Where are you from?

ASSASSIN
Severin. (Realizes that was stupid)
Please don’t hurt my family.

VLAD
No one will harm your family.
Vlad slits the assassin’s throat. While he searches the body, his gypsy guards arrive, puffing and panting.

GUARD
Who’s this useless dead bastard?

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

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

CAZAN
I just heard. Are you okay?

VLAD
We’re both fine, we were lucky.

Vlad crosses to Eleanor, embracing her tightly.

VLAD (CONT’D)
I love you. I will be back soon.

She nods and Vlad heads out, Cazan in tow.

INT. CASTLE CORRIDOR, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

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

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

CAZAN
He is your brother.

Vlad is shocked silent.

CAZAN (CONT’D)
The result of an affair before you were born. It meant nothing and for years the mother’s claim went ignored. But after losing you and against my advice, your father sought the child out. They only met once but it was enough for her to confirm his legitimacy.
VLAD
So this bastard thinks he has claim to my throne?

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

VLAD
What do you mean?

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

VLAD
So the noblemen champion his claim? The assassin said he was from Severin.
(Fury building)
Gales.

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

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

Vlad storms from the room leaving Cazan deeply concerned.

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

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

VLAD
Indeed. What do you want?

ENVOY ONE
Sultan Mohammed sends his best regards.
(MORE)
ENVOY ONE (CONT'D)
He compliments you on your success
and commends your ability as king.
Now he must insist that you resume
your alliance in full.

VLAD
We have no alliance.

The second envoy immediately produces a scroll.

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

VLAD
May I?

Vlad briefly looks at the document before setting it alight.

VLAD (CONT’D)
I just took control back.

The Envoys are furious.

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

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

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

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
That takes care of that. Now, who
here knows a man called Vlad the
Monk?
Vlad tosses the Assassin’s pouch of gold onto the table in front of Gales. Gales tries to swallow the boulder in his throat.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Reimbursement. Stand up.

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
Where is he?

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

Vlad throws the gold coins in Gales face.

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

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

VLAD
Is that what you hear? Good.

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

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

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

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

(MORE)
VLAD (CONT'D)
To have any chance against the
Ottoman we must have unity in
Wallachia.

Vlad walks to the door, leaving the council stunned.

VLAD (CONT’D)
(Re Gales)
And put that slag on a spike, teach
people what happens to traitors.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

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

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

ELEANOR
You cannot sleep again?

Vlad shakes his head, peering out into the darkness.

VLAD
Tell the maid not to light these lanterns again.

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

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

VLAD
He stays until the crows have stripped his flesh.

ELEANOR
Vlad.

Vlad continues to stare off into the night.

VLAD
It cannot rest. He is still out there somewhere, waiting. Until he is found, neither of us are safe.
ELEANOR
Calin will find him. Nobody would
dare try anything now anyhow.

Vlad smiles, though her words offer little comfort.

VLAD
I don’t know what I would do if I
lost you.

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

Something about this strikes an ugly chord with Vlad.

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

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

ELEANOR
Where are you going?

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

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

Vlad kisses her, his resolve now outweighing his melancholy.

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

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

EXT. CALIN’S ESTATE, WALLACHIA - DAWN

Vlad arrives at Calin’s PALATIAL MANOR HOUSE with TWENTY MEN. He
scales the steps and enters the front door which has been
left wide open.
INT. HALLWAYS, CALIN’S MANOR HOUSE - DAWN

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

VLAD
Have you located the Monk?

CALIN
My men are looking, it might take some time.

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

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

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE, HUNGARY - DAY

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

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

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

TALL BROTHER (CONT’D)
Through pain I feel God’s salvation.

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

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

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

BOY
A Monk hides in the chapel of Yagis, two miles yonder.
VLAD
Thank you.
(To the Brother)
Saved by a child.

EXT. CHAPEL, VILLAGE OF YAGIS, HUNGARY - DAY

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

VLAD
Walk.

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

VLAD
Then why were you hiding?

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

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

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

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

VLAD
He gave me your name.

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

THE MONK
A man called Gales visited me, all I did was listen. He said you were ruining Wallachia and it was my duty from God to stop it. I swear, all I did was listen.
VLAD
Then why were you hiding? Did you agree to take my throne?

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
Did you agree to take my throne?

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

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

The Monk is suddenly struck with a ray of hope.

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

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

THE MONK (CONT’D)
Please, I will disappear into the monastery. You will never hear from me again, I swear.

VLAD
I cannot take that risk.

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

VLAD (CONT’D)
Forgive me.

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

MOTHER
No! Murderer!

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

VLAD
I know, but it was necessary. Make sure he receives a proper burial.
Vlad mounts his horse and without looking at the Monk’s mother, he gallops away.

EXT. TURKISH VILLA, ANTALYA, TURKEY – DAY

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

RADU
This is a surprise.

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

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

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

EXT. ORCHARDS, COUNTRY ESTATE, ANTALYA – DAY

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

MOHAMMED
So you like it here?

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

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

RADU
But at what cost? To try to achieve this against people’s will only leads to bloodshed and subjugation, the very antithesis of freedom and tolerance.
Mohammed is philosophical, desensitized to the realities of war.

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

RADU
Easy to say when you make none of the sacrifices.

(A tense beat)
Excuse me, I forget myself. I left politics behind the day I married your sister.

MOHAMMED
(Very serious)
Unfortunately not. My problems with your brother have escalated.

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

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

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

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

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

Radu flares, shoving Mohammed against a tree.

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

Mohammed’s guards rush up, but he waves them off.
MOHAMMED
You are heir to the throne and
married to an Ottoman princes. Like
it or not you are a part of this.

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

Radu turns to leave, Mohammed calling after him.

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

RADU
I already have.

Mohammed watches Radu depart, nodding to himself.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

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

INT. CHAPEL, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

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

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

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

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

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

ELEANOR
You could not sleep again?

Vlad just shakes his head, he cannot even look at her now.
Eleanor sits down, determined to talk to him.
ELEANOR (CONT’D)
You have barely said two words to me since you returned from Hungary.

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

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

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

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

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

ELEANOR (CONT’D)
Now you have to stay strong and continue to set a good example, to the people and to your children.

The way Eleanor says this makes Vlad suddenly curious.

VLAD
Are you with child?

ELEANOR
I’m almost certain.

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

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

VLAD
I will be down momentarily.

The guard leaves. Even this cannot sour Vlad’s joy.
VLAD (CONT’D)
Let me deal with this and I will come straight back. I thank God daily that I found you.

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

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

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

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

VLAD
Best behavior, you have my word.

Vlad strides across to meet the Envoy.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Welcome back, would you like to come in?

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

VLAD
When and where?

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

Vlad looks to Cazan who nods his encouragement.

VLAD
I will be there.
The Envoy simply nods and turns to leave. Vlad and Cazan walk back towards the castle.

CAZAN
What do you think?

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

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

INT. RADU AND SOFIA’S HOME, ANTALYA – NIGHT

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

RADU
Leave me. Get out!

EXT. RADU AND SOFIA’S HOME, ANTALYA – DAWN

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

INT. RADU AND SOFIA’S HOME, ANTALYA – NIGHT

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

EXT. RADU AND SOFIA’S HOME, ANTALYA – NIGHT

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

EXT. DANUBE – DAY

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

VLAD
What do you think?

CALIN
I think it’s a hornet’s nest.
VLAD
You scared?

CALIN
Not since I was a child.

EXT. COURTYARD, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - DAY

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

GENERAL
Be ready.

INT. FORTRESS, SILISTRA - DAY

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

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

Vlad draws his sword, Calin follows suite.

GENERAL
Guards!

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

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

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

VLAD
I will soon wipe that smile off of your face.

ENVOY
I do not think you are in any position to be making threats. Send my regards to Allah.
Vlad and Calin are roughly escorted from the room.

EXT. COURTYARD, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - NIGHT

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

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

    OTTOMAN GUARD
    Shut up!

EXT. FORTRESS, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

EXT. DANUBE - NIGHT

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

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

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

    VLAD (CONT’D)
    I want you to send a message to Mohammed.
And Vlad slashes the doppelganger’s face giving him a matching scar.

EXT. TOWNSHIP OF SILISTRA, BULGARIA - NIGHT

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

VLAD O.S.
We have no quarrel with the people of Bulgaria.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, SILISTRA, BULGARIA - DAWN

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

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

(With a wry smile)
Those of you that wish to stay and fight alongside the Ottoman, make your peace with God and prepare for the afterlife.

Vlad’s men howl and cheer.

EXT. OCEAN CLIFFS, ANTALYA - DAY

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

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

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

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

RADU
Forgive me.

MOHAMMED
This was not your fault.

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

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

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

Radu gathers himself, Mohammed presses on.

MOHAMMED
So what will you do now?

RADU
I will wait quietly to join them in the afterlife.

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

RADU
I have no responsibilities.

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

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

Radu stands, furious.

**RADU**

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

**MOHAMMED**

Or convince him to surrender.

**RADU**

He would never surrender to me!

**MOHAMMED**

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

**RADU**

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

Mohammed cares little about the judgement of his old friend.

**MOHAMMED**

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

(Standing to leave)

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

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

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

Months have passed. The Danube has thawed and an army of thirty thousand Christian soldiers are assembled on its bank. They work TENDING CROPS and DIGGING TRENCHES. Occasional glances are cast over the Danube. When will the Ottoman come?
As more time passes the dense WHEAT CROPS that surround the camp begin to flourish in the PARTICULARLY HOT EARLY SUMMER. Men work on their knees spreading straw then burlap at the base of the wheat.

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

EXT. SURVEILLANCE TOWER, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY

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

WATCHMAN
I fell asleep Sir.

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

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DAY

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

VLAD
Welcome back brother. Have you come to join us?

RADU
I have come to negotiate.

Vlad deflates, covering his disappointment with hostility.

RADU (CONT’D)
Please Vlad, let us work together and find a way to resolve these problems peacefully.

VLAD
You mean surrender.

RADU
To fight is madness. You are facing an army of over a hundred thousand men. If you surrender now and I can convince Mohammed to let you keep your throne. Father made the right choice in your position.
VLAD
Our father was buried alive for that decision! You never saw Wallachia, Radu. It was destroyed, our people were starving.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RADU
Then he will grow up just as angry as you and this will go on forever.
VLAD
Just until the Ottoman realize they cannot take away our freedom.

They have obviously reached a stale mate.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Don’t come back here, Radu. Let Mohammed and I settle this now.

RADU
This is not only the way, Vlad.

VLAD
I am afraid it is.

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

RADU
Vlad!

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

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE - DAY

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

VLAD
It was another trap. We go to war.

STEPHEN
How many men do we face?

VLAD
One hundred thousand.

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

INT. WAR TENT, CHRISTIAN CAMP - DAY

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

CAZAN
Hungary will not fight.
VLAD
I didn’t expect them to. It does not matter, if we are clever we can defeat them.

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

VLAD
You fought Murad, Mohammed is not his father. I know I can beat him. (Referencing the map) Every past war has been fought protecting the Danube, concentrating our forces in one small area. With the bigger army they will always win.

CAZAN
Exactly.

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

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

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

Cazan is not convinced, he looks to Stephen.

CAZAN
Stephen?

After a moment of hesitation, Stephen nods.

STEPHEN
I am with Vlad.

Cazan sighs, resigned.
CAZAN
I said my piece. What would you have me do?

VLAD
Sit down, I’ll explain everything.

EXT. CHRISTIAN’S CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE – NIGHT

A NERVOUS YOUNG SOLDIER stands at the edge of a six foot trench, dug twenty feet from the bank of the Danube. He peers into the blackness over the river then glances to his side and we see that he is joined by the ENTIRE CHRISTIAN ARMY. Across the trench Vlad rides out to face them.

VLAD
Today the Sultan sent his best negotiator, my brother, to offer us another treaty. When I did not accept they tried to kill me. What does that tell you? I think these slags are afraid to fight us.

The men roar and cheer.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Twelve years ago my father surrendered without a fight. Many of you thought that was a mistake, ten years of slavery confirmed it. Now we are free again and they want to take that from us simply because they have a bigger army? I say come and try.

More cheers, Calin grins.

VLAD (CONT’D)
I fought Mohammed once, man to man. He was in the infirmary for a month. One of us is worth ten of them, for we have a reason to fight. We fight, as vengeance for ten years of slavery. We fight, because it is our duty to protect Christendom. We fight, because we are Wallachians and no one will rule us.

The men roar with enthusiasm. Vlad nods to Calin who bends forward and dips his ARROW into a FLAMING POT OF OIL. The rest of the soldiers follow suit.
Calin draws back and releases his ARROW which is immediately followed by thirty thousand more, their flames illuminating the sky. Now we see the Danube is filled with HUNDREDS OF OTTOMAN LONG BOATS.

Vlad jumps the trench, joining Calin and Stephen.

    CALIN
    Nice speech.

Stephen watches apprehensively as arrows to rain down upon the Ottoman, claiming the first victims of this battle.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, BANK OF THE DANUBE – NIGHT

Ottoman soldiers rush the Wallachian bank, diving into the trench to avoid the merciless arrows. As they scramble to climb out of the other side, the first line of Christian soldiers charge forward, cutting them down.

Arrows continue raining down upon the approaching Ottoman boats. But soldiers keep coming and soon thousands are flooding into the trench. As it becomes difficult to hold them, Stephen rushes to Vlad.

    STEPHEN
    I think we should call the retreat.

Vlad nods and Stephen signals the HORN MAN, who blows the call to retreat and the Christian army disappear back into the dense crops that surround the battle field.

Ottoman soldiers continue to pour onto Wallachia, shielding themselves from the last volley of arrows as they wait for the next command.

    OTTOMAN GENERAL
    Pursue!

They rush forward into the tall crops. As hundreds disappear into the wheat, another volley of FLAMING ARROWS descend upon them. The arrows ignite the previously oil soaked ground, turning the fields of crops into a flaming inferno. The Ottoman soldiers burn and scream but cannot escape as they are trapped against a wall of their arriving countrymen.

EXT. MOHAMMED’S BOAT, DANUBE – NIGHT

Mohammed’s boat idles a safe distance from shore. He angrily watches as his soldiers slowly retreat from the flames. The sky line looks beautiful on fire, everything awash in a thin orange haze. Mohammed fires Radu an icy stare.
EXT. MOHAMMED’S BOAT, BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DAY

The sun rises casting a golden glow over the BLACKENED EARTH. The entire Ottoman army now stand on Wallachian soil. HUNDREDS of OTTOMAN CORPSES are being buried in the trench.

Radu arrives, somberly surveying the carnage. Mohammed barrels past him followed by his FIRST GENERAL, MASTIS.

MOHAMMED
I want us marching within the hour.

EXT. SOUTHERN VILLAGE, WALLACHIA - DAY

Vlad rides towards a village with a BATTALION OF SOLDIERS. The land behind them is on FIRE, the sky black with smoke.

As they thunder into the village, a PRIEST steps into their path, his CRUCIFIX raised. Vlad spooks, rearing his horse.

PRIEST
We want no trouble.

Vlad calms and faces the gathering congregation of villagers.

VLAD
The Ottoman have invaded, they will be here within two days. I need all able bodied men to join the fight. Women and children pack all you can carry and head north. Go now.

The villagers disperse. Vlad turns to his men.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Herd every strong animal away, slaughter the rest, dump their carcasses in the well. Destroy anything that could be of use.

The villagers watch in horror as Vlad’s men destroy their homes.

EXT. CHRISTIAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - DAY

The Christian army rest, taking cover from the intense afternoon sun. Calin enters the camp with FIVE HUNDRED MEN, most of who are simple farmers. Stephen intercepts him as he heads towards his tent.
STEPHEN
I need to talk to you. What do you make of all of this?

CALIN
All of what?

STEPHEN
You know what I’m talking about. We are playing cat and mouse with an army over three times our size and destroying this country in the process. Does Vlad know what he’s doing?

Calin shrugs, also conflicted but fiercely loyal.

CALIN
He’s brought us this far.

STEPHEN
Where does it end though?

CALIN
What are you suggesting?

STEPHEN
I don’t know, but this is madness.

Then Vlad appears, making Stephen balk.

VLAD
How did it go?

CALIN
Twelve villages destroyed. I got about five hundred more men.

VLAD
Excellent. Rest an hour and then we head south, see what these monkeys are doing. Stephen, I want you to take the army north. Get them to the mountains and rest.

Stephen nods, casting a weary look to Calin.

EXT. VILLAGE, WALLACHIA - DAY

The Ottoman army march under the scorching sun, the land BLACK AND SMOULDERING as far as the eye can see. Ahead of them lies another ruined village.
MASTIS

Halt.

The Ottoman army stop marching. Mohammed, Radu and General Mastis listen as a SCOUT gives his report from the village.

SCOUT

The village is deserted like all the rest. The well poisoned.

MASTIS

Sire, our water supplies run very low. It is my advice that we rest here and replenish supplies before advancing.

MOHAMMED

Fine, send a party to the Danube. While we wait, you will head north and formulate a plan to end this quickly. I am starting to lose patience.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - DAY

From a distance we see the massive Ottoman army at rest. TWO PARTIES depart the camp. The larger group heads south, the smaller goes north.

Vlad lowers his eyeglass and we see that it is from his point of view that we have seen this. He turns to Calin.

VLAD

You want the big one or the small one?

CALIN

The small.

Vlad grins and climbs down from his high perch revealing five thousand of his men laying in wait.

EXT. BANK OF THE DANUBE, WALLACHIA - DUSK

The LARGE OTTOMAN PARTY hurriedly fill many containers with water, nervous in their work. One man stops working, peering off into the gloom. Then another man begins to stare.

Vlad and three thousand of his men have surrounded them.
VLAD
Drop your weapons and you will not
be harmed.
(They drop their weapons)
You are now prisoners of Wallachia.
(To his men)
Take them to Tirgoviste.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA – DAY

The sun is rising again and tensions are mounting. The
SCOUTING PARTIES have yet to return, long overdue now. Then
Radu sees something on the horizon through the rippling heat.

Moments later the DECAPITATED BODY OF MASTIS rides into camp.
Radu slows the horse and begins undoing the straps, clearly
affected by his brother’s brutality. Mohammed strides over.

MOHAMMED
I hope you are satisfied.

RADU
None of this is my fault.

MOHAMMED
You had an opportunity to end this
quietly and you did not take it.
All of this is your fault!
(Turning to his General)
We should already be moving
General.

SADEEK, the SECOND GENERAL quickly turns to the men.

SADEEK
We’re moving. Those of you that
have water, share it with those
that do not.

The last of the water is distributed amongst the soldiers,
most do not get any.

EXT. WALLACHIA, BLACKENED PLANES – DAY

The Ottoman move slowly under the merciless afternoon sun, it
has been ten hours since most have had water. The Carpathian
mountains are now visible in the distance, green and lush but
another full days march away. One man falters and falls.

Sadeek approaches the Sultan’s carriage.
SADEEK
Sire, the men are exhausted and we desperately need water. I request that we make camp for the night and send a party to the mountains for supplies.

MOHAMMED
How do you know they will not be caught?

SADEEK
I do not, but we need water or the men will start dying.

Mohammed agrees with a curt nod.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - NIGHT

The Ottoman army rest under a bright moon. Even the watchman struggle to stay awake after marching all day with no water.

From the black, Vlad and Calin creep in through the rows of tents, a hundred of their hardest with them. Simultaneously the men each enter a tent, silently slitting the throats of the occupants. Not a sound emerges from any tent. The men regroup and move on to the next row.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - LATER

Vlad and Calin have made their way to the center of the camp where they covertly watch the SULTAN’S TENT.

VLAD
Mohammed is right inside that tent. We could finish this now.

CALIN
He’s got fifty guards. Come on, we left them a nice surprise for the morning.

Calin retreats into the night. A moment longer and Vlad follows him out.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, WALLACHIA - DAWN

Mohammed is livid, watching as every tent is checked and bodies are piled for burial. Radu stands nearby, listening as Sadeek gives his report.
SADEEK
No one heard anything Sire, he’s like a ghost. There are at least one thousand dead, some have disappeared completely.

MOHAMMED
And the water party? What happened to them?

SADEEK
No word Sire.

MOHAMMED
(Seething)
You must be thirsty, here have a drink of mine.

SADEEK
Thank you Sire, but I will drink when the soldiers drink.

MOHAMMED
I insist, General.

Mohammed hands Sadeek his canteen who nervously raises it to his lips. He is about to drink when Mohammed stabs him in the stomach.

MOHAMMED (CONT’D)
Imbecile!
(Turning to Radu)
Get my army ready to move.

RADU
Your men are ravished with dehydration. Another day of marching under these conditions could kill them. See sense Mohammed, it is no accident we find ourselves in this position.

MOHAMMED
We are thirty miles from the Carpathian mountains where we will rest and hydrate. From there Tirgoviste is a two day march and Vlad will have nowhere left to run.

A tense beat.

MOHAMMED (CONT’D)
I told you to get my army ready.
RADU
I am not your general.

Radu turns his back on Mohammed and helps bury the dead.

EXT. WALLACHIA, BLACKENED PLANES - DAY

The ravaged Ottoman army forge ahead as the sun taunts them with gentle morning rays. Ahead, the densely wooded CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS look like utopia.

EXT. CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, WALLACHIA - DAY

The Christian army rest on a clearing at the foot of the mountains. The clearing is surrounded on three sides by forest, a stream runs along one side. The perfect camp.

Cazan arrives, hurriedly looking for Vlad. He finds him in the center of the camp, talking with Stephen and Calin.

VLAD
Is everything alright?

CAZAN
The prison is filled to capacity, we can sustain no more men.

VLAD
We will send no more, we fight tonight.

CAZAN
(Shocked)
Then why take so many prisoners? I hoped you had decided to negotiate.

VLAD
The more men in our prisons, the less men we face on the battle field. When we have defeated them, I will sell them back to the Sultan to raise money to rebuild the country.

CAZAN
You are still outnumbered three-to-one Vlad. It is ludicrous to take them on in straight battle.

STEPHEN
I agree.
This hits Vlad like a thunderbolt.

STEPHEN (CONT’D)
We should talk about negotiating, Vlad. With so many prisoners, we will decide the terms.

Vlad swallows his rage, pointing to Stephen’s Dragon Pendant.

VLAD
Look at that pendant and remember why your father died. I gave you back your throne and I gave you back your freedom. Now I’m asking you to trust me.

STEPHEN
Of course I trust you, but we have to be realistic. There are still at least eighty thousand of them.

VLAD
Their morale is crippled. They have marched for days, sick with dehydration as we rested. We strike tonight, at this very spot. Kill Mohammed and the rest will flee.

Vlad looks to Calin who nods his unwavering support.

VLAD (CONT’D)
This was always the plan, Stephen.

CAZAN
How can you be sure they will come here?

CALIN
They need water and that stream is the only option for miles.

VLAD
We’ve come this far, brother. It’s time to finish what they started. We can only do it with your help.

Vlad’s eyes bore into Stephen until finally he nods his compliance.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Then it’s settled.

Vlad walks Cazan back to his horse.
VLAD (CONT’D)
I need you back in Tirgoviste.

CAZAN
Are you sure you know what you’re doing?

VLAD
This ends tonight.

Vlad slaps his back reassuringly, sending him on his way.

EXT. CLEARING, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS – DUSK

The clearing is now empty as the Ottoman rush in, running to the stream to drink. Slowly it transforms into another camp. Row after row of neat tents, the Sultan’s Quarters at the center.

EXT. CLEARING, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS – NIGHT

Radu walks through the quiet camp unable to sleep. He sits with a group of NIGHT WATCHMEN who offer him hot tea.

A noise in the forest and one of the watchmen peers into the darkness. After a moment he shrugs, just an animal.

EXT. FOREST, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS – NIGHT

The Christian army are assembled in the forest. Vlad stands with Calin and Stephen in a moment of silent unity. Stephen is clearly nervous.

VLAD
Just keep breathing and keep your sword moving. God is with you.

The men embrace before mounting their horses and setting off in separate directions, each leading off a third of the army.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS – NIGHT

Radu is dozing with the watchmen. A WHISTLING NOISE suddenly fills the air and they are on their feet. Then SLAM, one of the watchmen is knocked back down, an ARROW through his shoulder. Instantly the camp is in chaos.

From the NORTH FOREST, Vlad and his men scream down into the camp, slashing and hacking all in their path. The unprepared Ottoman are getting slaughtered.
EXT. WEST FOREST - NIGHT

Stephen sits before his MOLDAVIAN SOLDIERS watching Vlad’s charge. His old friend the CAPTAIN steps forward.

CAPTAIN
It is time to move, Sir.

Stephen remains motionless, watching the massive Ottoman army beginning to galvanize.

STEPHEN
We’re not moving, I will not sacrifice these men. I told Vlad but he would not see sense.
(Turning to the battle)
There is no hope of victory here.

The Captain is disgusted but he follows his king’s order.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Vlad attempts to fight his way to the SULTAN’S QUARTERS but the Ottoman are rapidly organizing. He looks to the EAST and WEST, desperately needing his reinforcements.

Radu finishes arming himself amongst the Sultan’s guard as Calin thunders in with SEVEN THOUSAND MORE MEN. They catch the Ottoman flank off guard causing utter devastation.

Radu surveys the situation, turning his attention to the WEST FOREST. Realizing that another strike will be coming from that direction, he turns to a nearby OFFICER.

RADU
Assemble as many men as you can and meet me at the west side of camp.

The Officer looks to the quiet forest to the west, understanding Radu’s concern.

OFFICER
Yes Sir.

Back on Vlad, who has found his way to Calin. They have a real fight on their hands as more Ottoman rush in.

VLAD
Where the hell is Stephen?

CALIN
I don’t know.
They both look over to the WEST FOREST where a group of Ottomans are already beginning to assemble.

    VLAD
    He’s leaving it too late.

EXT. WEST FOREST - NIGHT

Stephen watches as many more Ottomans line the clearing in front of them. Radu rides through the men, peering out into the gloomy forest. Stephen turns to his Captain.

    STEPHEN
    Stay here.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Vlad and Calin are in the fight of their lives as the Ottomans start to take control. Again Vlad looks to the WEST and is nearly felled by what he sees. STEPHEN STANDS TALKING WITH RADU.

Blinded by fury, Vlad mounts a horse and gallops recklessly into the mass of Ottoman soldiers. With eyes locked on Stephen and Radu, he is oblivious to all other danger. And BAM, an arrow bites into his shoulder.

Radu is stunned to see his brother fall. Disorientated, Vlad struggles to his feet, clumsily defending himself against an Ottoman soldier. Then SLASH, Calin cuts the top of the soldier’s head off before pulling Vlad up onto his horse.

    CALIN
    Retreat! Retreat!

    VLAD
    What are you doing?

    CALIN
    Saving your life again. We cannot win now, it is time to retreat.

Calin gallops through the carnage and up into the forest, taking his king to safety. The rest of the army soon follow, disappearing as swiftly as they came.

EXT. FOREST, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Vlad and Calin regroup with their men in the forest. Vlad climbs onto his own horse.
VLAD
We need to get to Tirgoviste.

CALIN
You need to rest an hour and cauterize that wound.

VLAD
There is no time. We can still beat them but we need to be prepared.

The men are uneasy, looking to Calin. After a moment, he spurs his horse and they take off again through the forest.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAWN

Through early morning mist Stephen surveys the aftermath. Bodies litter the field, a murder of crows circle above. Mohammed stands with Radu and his THIRD GENERAL, KOSOVO.

KOSOVO
Sire, we must stay strong. I advise abandoning this campaign and moving to Moldavia. We can regroup and invade Hungary from there.

MOHAMMED
And what message do you think that would send to the rest of Europe? We finish this, Vlad will not get the better of me.

RADU
As long as you are willing to accept the responsibility of thirty thousand more deaths.

MOHAMMED
Ironic coming from you. Bury our men and get us ready to march.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

Vlad and his remaining ten thousand men arrive at Tirgoviste. Cazan rushes out to meet them.

CAZAN
What happened?
VLAD
The Ottoman are coming. Bring in the towns people and fortify the castle for siege.

CAZAN
We have no supplies, I have been feeding your prisoners.

VLAD
What choice do we have? They will be here by tomorrow. Fortify the castle.

Vlad heads inside.

CAZAN
What happened?

CALIN
It failed, Stephen betrayed us.

They share a moment, reflecting upon the magnitude of the problem they face.

CALIN (CONT’D)
I could never have imagined that it would all come to this. I should have stayed in the forest.

CAZAN
Perhaps it’s time you returned. Get some rest, I will tend to the men.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, WALLACHIA – NIGHT

Vlad rushes in to find Eleanor on their balcony watching the commotion below, her pregnancy clearly visible now. She is shocked to see Vlad’s state, ragged and bleeding.

ELEANOR
What happened? Are you shot again?

VLAD
It just pierced my shoulder.

Vlad embraces her tightly, breathing her in.

VLAD (CONT’D)
I have longed to have you in my arms again.

But Eleanor shrugs him off, confused and scared.
ELEANOR
What is happening Vlad? Why is the army here?

VLAD
The Ottoman are coming.

Eleanor’s shock quickly turns to panic.

ELEANOR
When?

VLAD
Probably by tomorrow.

ELEANOR
We have to leave. We can disappear into the forest, they will never find us.

VLAD
If we run, we will be running forever. I gave my word to the people, I have to stay and finish this.

ELEANOR
If it were possible to stop them you would have done it already. You did everything that you could Vlad, now it is time to save your family.

VLAD
I cannot turn my back on Wallachia, Eleanor. But you should go, I will send Calin with you.

Eleanor is starting to cry, overcome with fear and frustration.

ELEANOR
Then I am staying too and I will die with you. Or we will raise our child together from the confines of a Turkish prison cell. I will not be your widow while you martyr yourself.

VLAD
I am not martyring myself. I can still beat him.
ELEANOR
How Vlad? How will you beat him now?

Vlad has no answer. He covers his breaking heart with a cold demeanor.

VLAD
That is why you must leave.
Please understand that I cannot.

ELEANOR
I am not leaving without you! God damn you Vlad! You swore that you would not make the same mistakes as your father but you are so much worse. At least he knew when he was beaten.

VLAD
I thought the point of being a martyr was that you die so that your beliefs are never beaten.

Eleanor slaps his face.

ELEANOR
And the point of being a husband is that you would do anything to save your wife and child.

Vlad nods, a dark resolve forming. He regards Eleanor for a long moment before barreling out of the room.

ELEANOR (CONT’D)
Where are you going?

VLAD
To save my wife and child.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - DAY

The courtyard is filled to capacity with soldiers resting and eating. Vlad explodes out of the castle and mounts his horse.

VLAD
(Barking at the men)
Now is the time for work not rest, or come this time tomorrow you shall rest an eternity. I want twenty thousand young trees cut and stripped by sunset.
CALIN
What’s going on?

VLAD
What do you think? The Ottoman are coming, I think it would be prudent to be prepared for them.

With that Vlad about turns and gallops from the courtyard.

EXT. FOREST, CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY
The Ottoman make steady progress through the dense forest.

EXT. FOREST, TIRGOVISTE - DAY
Vlad’s men work furiously cutting and stripping small trees, one end is sharpened to a point. They are making STAKES.

EXT. PRISON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY
Vlad surveys the cells of OTTOMAN PRISONERS, all malnourished and filthy. He beckons for the PRISON GUARD to join him.

    VLAD
    I want these prisoners arranged into groups of one hundred and brought to the town common.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY
On the town common, Vlad supervises as the stakes are laid out in rows. A hole is dug at the foot of each. Cazan arrives to witness Calin escorting the first group of prisoners down to the common.

EXT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DUSK
Eleanor anxiously paces when the silence is abruptly broken by a WAIL OF AGONY. The blood drains from her face as she goes to the balcony to investigate.

EXT TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAY
Now we see the cause of the wail as Vlad assists in the IMPALEMENT of a Ottoman soldier. The process is brutal.
The greased tip of the stake is rammed into the man’s chest, then several men hoist the stake vertical and slide it into the pre-dug hole. Gravity now takes hold as the weight of the man causes him to slide down the stake, impaling him.

The atmosphere is thick, a palpable sense amongst the men that they will never be forgiven for their participation in these atrocities. Vlad approaches Calin, both are literally covered in blood. Calin is unable to meet his eye.

EXT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - DUSK

Night is falling. Eleanor watches the town common where hundreds of men writhe in terrible pain as the die. Haunted by the gruesome spectacle, she drops her robe. Tears well in her eyes as she touches her swollen belly.

ELEANOR
I’m sorry.

Vlad enters the courtyard below as Eleanor climbs up onto the balcony wall. He looks up, instantly panicked.

VLAD
What are you doing?

ELEANOR
Where could we go from here, Vlad?

Eleanor closes her eyes and allows herself to fall backwards. She drops gracefully for a split second before hitting the ground with a CRUNCH. Vlad rushes to her, cradling her broken body. The frightened townspeople look on in horror.

EXT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad carries Eleanor into their chambers, gently lowering her onto their bed. He brushes the hair from her face and holds her hand, laying his head on her lap.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Calin sits in the courtyard with his men, broken by the death of his sister and his participation in this massacre. The men quietly debate around him.

MAN
Half our soldiers have already left, I don’t want to stay here to die. We did what we could.
MAN TWO
You’re right. If that spectacle
doesn’t stop them, all of us are
going to end up on those spikes.

Cazan joins the group and the men quiet down.

CAZAN
No need to stop, I agree. I think
it is time to return to the forest.

Calin and Cazan hold each others gaze for a long time.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad has fallen asleep. Calin enters quietly, coming to the
side of their bed. Lightly he kisses Eleanor, placing his
small Crucifix in her hand.

CALIN
Goodbye beautiful girl.

A tear rolls from Calin’s chin as Cazan appears at the
doorway. Calin looks at his old friend. Knowing that Vlad
would never come with them, he slips back out of the room.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAWN

In the morning light we see the full horror of Vlad’s last
stand. Eighteen thousand impaled Ottoman stretch from one end
of the common to the other, row after row on progressively
taller stakes. They create a human wall of defense. History
will dub this ‘THE FOREST OF THE IMPALED’.

Radu, Mohammed and what is left of the Ottoman army look on
in acute horror. Mohammed drops to his knees in Prayer.

MOHAMMED
Forgive me Allah, my pride has
blinded me. Forgive me for the
lives of these men.

Mohammed turns to look at the faces of his soldiers who stand
at the precipice of the forest. He sees them for the first
time, flesh and blood. Exhausted and scared.

MOHAMMED (CONT’D)
You were right, the price of
victory is too high. This is where
it ends.

Radu looks at the carnage, slowly shaking his head.
RADU
No, if you stop now every life lost on this campaign will have been for nothing.

MOHAMMED
And I will live with that for the rest of my life. But I have lost half of my army, I can afford to lose no more. This is too much.

RADU
Which is why it can never happen again. You two will never stop fighting. There will be twenty more wars, thousands more will die.

MOHAMMED
But not today.

RADU
(Gesturing the dead)
Look at your men! You cannot let this happening again. Let me finish this.

Mohammed looks at the rows of dead soldiers, finally nodding his agreement.

MOHAMMED
You have twenty-four hours. No negotiations. By sunrise tomorrow I want to see a one of these stakes through Vlad’s heart.

Radu looks sadly at the castle.

RADU
He will fall fighting to save the castle.
(Turning back to Mohammed)
When I am king, I rule Wallachia my way. We will have peace.

Mohammed musters a smile and nods.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Vlad sleeps, at peace for a moment, then CRUNCH. A noise jolts him awake. Vlad keeps his eyes shut a moment longer before finally confronting Eleanor’s body. When he does, he sees Calin’s crucifix. Then again it comes, CRUNCH.
Vlad climbs unsteadily to his feet and crosses to the balcony. The courtyard below is EMPTY, everyone has left him. Vlad quietly absorbs his fate. Then again CRUNCH and the castle gates buckle.

EXT. OUTER CASTLE WALLS, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

The BATTERING RAM rolls one more time and the gates crack open. Ottoman soldiers rush into the courtyard ready to fight, only to find it empty.

Radu pushes through the men as a CLAPPING begins to echo off of the walls. All look up to see Vlad standing on his balcony railing. The Ottoman soldiers surge forward.

    RADU
    Halt! Stay were you are! No one enters the castle but me.

    VLAD
    I will meet you in the war room.

Vlad disappears back into the castle.

INT. WAR ROOM, CASTLE, TIRGOVISTE - NIGHT

Radu enters the war room apprehensively to find Vlad slumped on his thrown, his breathing laboured. Absentmindedly he twirls the Toledo Blade.

    VLAD
    You finally came home.

    RADU
    You gave me no choice. How could you do that to those men?

    VLAD
    An arrow, the sword, impalement, what difference does it make? They invaded my country and they got what they deserved.

    RADU
    No one deserves that. This whole war was for nothing. Here we are again, negotiating. Only now seventy thousand men have died and I can no longer save you.
VLAD
This is the way it always had to be, Radu. What is to be my fate?

RADU
Impalement at sunrise.

VLAD
Fitting. My wife is dead, can I rely on you to give her a proper burial?

RADU
I will see to it. You can stay here until dawn, I’ll send in a priest.

Vlad smiles.

VLAD
Do you think God will forgive me for the things I’ve done?

RADU
I ask myself the same question.

Radu looks sadly at his brother before slowly turning away. As he reaches the door, Vlad calls after him.

VLAD
I love you Radu, in spite of everything.

And he tosses the Toledo Blade to his brother.

VLAD (CONT’D)
Remember who you are, this country needs you now.

RADU
I know what this country needs.

They regard each other a moment longer before Radu forces himself to leave. We stay on Vlad, sitting injured and alone.

EXT. TOWN COMMON, TIRGOVISTE - DAWN

The sky is red as the sun rises over Wallachia. Fires roar on the town common, warming the Ottoman soldiers who quietly bury their dead.

All work stops as Vlad is led down to the common, he once again wears his FATHER’S CRUCIFIX.
Soldiers heckle and spit on him as he passes. Radu is devastated watching his brother walk to his death. He rushes to Mohammed.

RADU
I beg you to spare him, for me.

MOHAMMED
You know I cannot do that.

RADU
Let him rot in a prison for the rest of his life, that would be worse for him anyway. Please Mohammed, I cannot watch him die.

MOHAMMED
Then do not watch, but my men demand this.

RADU
You care not what your men want. Show the world that you are the better man. Do not stoop to his level. Prove you are the better man, Mohammed.

Mohammed looks at the pain and desperation in his friend’s face, likes the idea of being the better man.

MOHAMMED
If he will bow to me, he can spend the rest of his life in prison.

Radu nods his thanks and rushes over to Vlad. A stake has been laid out in front of him and the whole army has gathered around, eager to watch the execution.

RADU
Mohammed will spare you if you bow to him.

VLAD
That would erase everything that I have done.

RADU
Nothing could erase that. You did everything that you could. Take solace in that and live out the rest of your life in peace.

Vlad is touched by his brother’s grief but shakes his head.
VLAD
I cannot do that Radu.

Mohammed enters the circle and all bow, all but Vlad. General Kosovo approaches.

KOSOVO
The Sultan is willing to spare your life if you will swear your alliance to the Empire and bow to him now.

The Ottoman soldiers boo and holler their objections as Stephen pushes his way through the crowd. Vlad shakes his head, refusing to bow.

RADU
Please Vlad.

STEPHEN
For God’s sake Vlad, just bow.

Seeing Stephen oddly strengthens Vlad’s resolve. He touches his brother’s face. Then instead of bowing, Vlad raises his arms and puts back his head, making the sign of the cross.

Mohammed nods to Kosovo and the STAKE IS RAMMED INTO VLAD’S CHEST. The stake is then hoisted vertical and slid into its hole. The Ottoman soldiers cheer.

We stay on Radu as he walks away from the crowd. He brushes the tears from his face, looking up to the bright red sky.

As we fade to Black, script runs;

That night Vlad’s body disappeared, his final resting place is still unknown.

Radu finally brought peace to Wallachia. He negotiated the first treaty between the Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. The Ottoman never advanced any further into Europe.

Vlad would be remembered forever. By some, as the warrior king who led the last crusade. But by most, as the blood sucking legend that his life inspired.

DRACULA