

EXT. HILLTOP MONASTERY - DUSK

SUPER: "Shagov Monastery, Bucharest - 1476"

The isolated hilltop monastery juts ominously above the thin veil of fog that engulfs the forest below. A crumbling wall surrounds its ancient cemetery, simple monks' dormitories, and small chapel.

EXT. UPPER HILLSIDE - MONASTERY - DUSK

A lightly armored SCOUT (20s) of the Royal Romanian Army swiftly and stealthily snakes down through the fog and brush, a small, silver crucifix glistening around his neck.

EXT. LOWER HILLSIDE - MONASTERY - DUSK

SIX SOLDIERS anxiously await the Scout in a natural alcove. They too wear silver crucifixes and the armor of the Royal Romanian Army.

Leading them is LORD VLAD'MIR (30s), handsome and intense. Vlad'Mir looks up as the Scout joins them. The Scout gestures, "Three tall, five small." Silently, Vlad'Mir assigns three men with swords to the "tall" and the other three with crossbows to the "small."

Taking a quick glance at the nearly setting sun, Vlad'Mir makes the sign of the cross, grabs his silver-tipped lance, and leads the quiet assault up the steep hill that leads to--

EXT. HILLTOP MONASTERY - WALLED PATIO - DUSK

TWO TALL GYPSY SENTRIES, wearing disheveled clothing and deadly sharp scimitars, their eyes ringed by dark circles and their skin unnaturally moist, toss raw rat meat to the FIVE MALNOURISHED WOLVES they hold tethered with chains. They LAUGH as the wolves fight and GROWL for every juicy morsel.

A THIRD GYPSY SENTRY, with the same dark circled eyes and moist skin, throws a log on a nearby campfire.

The Romanian Soldiers with swords attack with quick, machine-like precision, incapacitating the three Gypsy Sentries before any of them can react.

Simultaneously, the Romanian Archers fire on three of the five Wolves, while Vlad'Mir skewers the last two together with a quick, powerful thrust of his lance.

Vlad'Mir frees his lance and gives another silent signal to his men. With practiced efficiency, each Soldier removes a small axe from his pack and, in a quick series of CHOPS, decapitates the fallen man or beast nearest him.

The Soldiers gather the severed heads and throw them into the dying campfire.

Vlad'Mir checks the sun again. Lower yet. He motions to his men to split up, pairing them off in search teams.

They grab small flaming logs and branches from the campfire to use as torches in the dimming light.

INT. HILLTOP MONASTERY - MAUSOLEUMS - DUSK

In short order, the Soldiers find four assorted wood and stone coffins. They throw back the lids and expose an eerily luminescent MOTIONLESS VAMPIRE lying within each.

Using silver spikes and wooden mallets, the Soldiers quickly impale the sleeping Vampires.

Each awakens with a SHRIEK, revealing their tell-tale fangs and bloodshot eyes. The spikes instantly poison the vampires' blood, causing their veins and blood vessels to turn dark, a darkness that quickly spreads throughout their bodies.

Even as the Vampires SHRIEK, squirm and GURGLE blackened blood, WHACK! the Soldiers behead them and gather the heads by the hair.

EXT. HILLTOP MONASTERY - ANCIENT CRYPT - DUSK

The Soldiers drop the decapitated heads into the now-raging campfire, as Vlad'Mir emerges dejected from one of the other crypts. One of the older Soldiers pauses at the fire to say a silent prayer.

The Scout hurries towards Vlad'Mir, nodding with deference. They speak in Romanian, indicated here by enclosing brackets. Onscreen, this text will appear as SUBTITLES.

SCOUT
<Lord Vlad'Mir, you must come.>

VLAD'MIR
<Is it him?>

The Scout shakes his head "no" and rushes into one of the more distant dormitories. Vlad'Mir is right on his heels.

INT. HILLTOP MONASTERY - DORMITORY HALLWAY - DUSK

After several turns, Vlad'Mir emerges in a corridor, where the Scout's PARTNER stands, towering over another dead, decapitated Gypsy Sentry. The Scout shrugs.

SCOUT
<I missed one.>

VLAD'MIR
<So I see.>

The Scout takes a step towards the room the Sentry was guarding. He turns back to Vlad'Mir with concern.

SCOUT
<It is not pleasant.>

INT. HILLTOP MONESTARY - DORMITORY ROOM - DUSK

The bodies of three dead MONKS are scattered around the room. Vlad'Mir and the Scout enter, swatting away flies and avoiding the sticky blood on the floor. Each Monk has a slit wrist.

Vlad'Mir picks up a shard of broken glass.

VLAD'MIR
<Better to choose death than
undeath.>

SCOUT
<Still, the church will not
appreciate their sacrifice.>

Vlad'Mir crosses himself when a slight WHIMPER from a nearby cabinet draws their attention. Vlad'Mir points his blood-tipped lance as the Scout grabs the door handle of the cabinet. The door swings open to reveal a frightened, frail young woman, ZOYA (19).

ZOYA
<Please don't kill me.>

Vlad'Mir says nothing until he checks the woman's neck, then her eyes. Satisfied, he lowers his lance.

VLAD'MIR
<You are safe now, child. The
demons have been destroyed.>

ZOYA
<You're the one they call "the
Impaler"?>

VLAD'MIR
<I am Vlad, yes.>

ZOYA
<The monks hoped you would come.
But they could not wait, did not
want to be forced to perform the
ritual.>

VLAD'MIR
<Ritual?>

ZOYA
<He was waiting for the night of
the full moon. I was to be the
Master's sacrifice.>

VLAD'MIR
<You have seen the Master?>

ZOYA
<Yes, he is here. In the crypt
beneath the raven.>

Vlad'Mir and the Scout turn to each other with a look of disbelief. Excited, they race outside, leaving the stunned Zoya behind with the Scout's partner.

EXT. HILLTOP MONASTERY - CEMETERY AREA - DUSK

Only a few slivers of sunlight remain. Vlad'Mir rushes towards his men. He shouts.

VLAD'MIR
<He is here! We must look for-->

Then he sees it: an ancient crypt with a stone raven perched menacingly above it. He runs for it, quickly finding a stairway hidden by brush behind it. His team follows.

INT. HILLTOP MONASTERY - UNDERGROUND CRYPT - DUSK

Vlad'Mir and the Scout rush down the crumbling steps, past the cobwebs and debris, and arrive in a chamber where they find a massive stone coffin.

Vlad'Mir brushes away dust to reveal the embossed plaque bearing the Dra'Ghoula family crest: a prominent "D" engulfed by a taloned raven. The Scout hands Vlad'Mir his simple silver spike.

Vlad'Mir shakes his head, reaches in his own pack and withdraws a cloth wrapped, ornate silver spike.

The Scout and another Soldier slide open the heavy coffin lid to reveal DRA'GHOULA (40s), Prince of Darkness, lying motionless inside. His skin is tinged with the same luminescent glow as the other vampires, but his dark hair and handsome, regal features strongly resemble Vlad'Mir's.

With solemn reverence, Vlad'Mir removes Dra'Ghoula's armored breastplate. He then takes a mallet from his pouch and places the silver spike over Dra'Ghoula's now-bare chest. He makes the sign of the cross and pulls his mallet back.

VLAD'MIR (CONT'D)
<Forgive me, my brother.>

He swings. SPLUNK! Blood splatters as the spike pierces flesh and bone. A second SPLUNK drives the spike deeper yet. Dra'Ghoula's eyes pop open, bloodshot and filled with hate and a fiery red glow. The veins on his face, chest and hands turn dark as the poison quickly spreads.

His mouth opens, gasping dark blood, but Dra'Ghoula does not shriek. He tries to grasp the spike, his strength waning fast as his body darkens. The fading light catches the "D"-crested ring he wears on one finger.

Dra'Ghoula locks eyes with Vlad'Mir, holding his gaze. Finally the glow in his eyes, and the hatred, both flicker out. Dra'Ghoula collapses in his coffin with a final HISS.

Vlad'Mir wipes a tear and turns away. The Scout hands his axe to Vlad'Mir.

SCOUT
<You must finish it, my liege, or his soul will never rest.>

VLAD'MIR
<No. Whatever beast he became, he is still my brother and our beloved prince. We will not desecrate his body.>

SCOUT
<But, sir, his soul-->

VLAD'MIR
<--Is in God's hands now. Only He can decide if the measure of a man is the sum of the deeds of his lifetime, or simply the actions of his final days.>

SCOUT
<I fear history will only remember him for the demon he became.>

VLAD'MIR
<Let us hope God shows a little more charity.>

Vlad'Mir spots a shiny gold locket in the coffin. He removes it and gently closes his brother's now-vacant eyes. They slide the heavy coffin lid closed.

VLAD'MIR (CONT'D)
<Bring some chains. And tell the others the nightmare is over. Dra'Ghoula is dead.>

The last rays of the sun fade from view.

FADE TO:

EXT. YUMA TERRITORIAL PRISON - NIGHT

SUPER: "Yuma Territorial Prison, Arizona 1886

Over 400 Years Later"

A tumbleweed rolls past a foreboding prison complex on an otherwise barren stretch of desert. The moon above is not quite full.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Hardened criminal BROCK TANNER (30s), solid, with eyes like cold steel, is exercising on the floor of his dirty, spartan cell.

Seated on one of the bunks is his wiry, bespectacled cellmate, CHARLIE (40s). They both wear torn and faded striped convict uniforms.

KRUMP (40s), an imposing guard, saunters up to the outside of the cell with an envelope.

KRUMP
Brock Tanner. Got a letter for you.
Warden says it's from the appeals
board.

Brock says nothing; he just continues doing crunches.

KRUMP (CONT'D)
I ain't got all day. Warden wants
you to have it.

BROCK
Then leave it.

KRUMP
You're taking it if I have to cram
it down your goddamn throat.

Charlie nervously watches as Brock stops his workout. Glaring back at Krump, Brock rises and takes the envelope. He crumples it unread and tosses it in the corner, turning his back to Krump.

Krump is furious. He reaches through the cell bars and locks Brock in a chokehold. Charlie starts in alarm.

CHARLIE
Brock!

KRUMP
Not so tough now, are you?

Brock struggles against the towering Krump.

KRUMP (CONT'D)
Still got a few days to knock the
sass out of you before you hang,
you sorry son of a bitch.

Brock is turning beet red.

BROCK
Warden...ain't gonna like it if you
cheat the hangman, Krump.

Krump loosens his grip and Brock drops to the floor.

KRUMP
I can't wait to piss on your grave,
Brock Tanner.

INT. PRISON - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Krump bangs his night stick on the cell bars and saunters down the hallway, banging on other cells as he walks. He smirks.

KRUMP (CONT'D)
Lights out in five, girlies.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Brock massages his neck. Charlie scurries to the corner to grab the crumpled envelope. He tears it open as he adjusts his mangled wire-framed spectacles with one broken lens.

CHARLIE
It don't do no good to get Krump
mad like that, Brock. This could be
good news.

The crumpled, typed letter inside is clearly a Stay of Execution.

BROCK
It ain't, Charlie.

Stamped inside the fold in bold red letters is the single word "DENIED". Within the body of the letter we can also read words like "hang by the neck until dead".

CHARLIE
How'd you know?

BROCK
It don't matter. I'm leaving
tonight.

Charlie coughs, wiping blood into a dirty rag. A stray drop spills on the letter. Brock stuffs his tattered spare blanket in the rough shape of a body in the top bunk.

CHARLIE
Breaking out? But how?

Brock reveals a ring of keys he's been clutching in his hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You let Krump grab you?

BROCK
Ain't about to meet my maker,
dancing from the end of a rope.

CHARLIE
Hot damn! We're making a break! Uh,
you is taking me with ya', ain't
ya', Brock?

Brock says nothing.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I might be scrawny, but I can track
like a hound dog and climb like a
polecat.

BROCK
You'd slow me down, Charlie.

CHARLIE
(thinking quickly)
There's, uh, there's a treasure. We
could split it if you take me with
you. Hell, you could have most of
it.

Charlie coughs more blood.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's easy pickin's, and it'd be
right on our way.

BROCK
I ain't said where I'm going.

CHARLIE
South; I figure it's got to be
Mexico. Get yourself a pretty
little senorita, lie low for a
while.

Another cough.

BROCK
Wouldn't hurt to have a little
spending money, I guess. Where is
this treasure of yours?

EXT. WILCOX STAGE DEPOT - DAY

STUMPY (late 50s), a crusty, crotchety, old coot of a cowboy
with a wooden peg-leg, leads a team of horses and a
stagecoach towards a small bench, shouting to anyone in
earshot.

STUMPY
Sulfur Springs, Tombstone, and
Bisbee! Climb aboard!

Behind him, EL DORADO KID (20s, Hispanic) struggles with some
saddle bags and a bag of mail. He is athletic, attractive,
and greener than he'd care to admit.

Seated at the bench are three passengers: the prim and proper
PRUDENCE BEAUMONT (mid 30s), her precocious son, TAD (10),
and the scholarly ABE (40s, thick Irish accent).

Prudence is wearing a sash that reads, "REPENT AND YE SHALL
BE SAVED", Tad struggles with his too-tight collar and tie,
and Abe adjusts the leather pouch that carries his ever-
present, well-worn notebook.

Abe's bushy red hair, wild moustache and tall, brutish countenance seem at odds with his gentle demeanor.

They all turn at Stumpy's approach, gathering their things.

STUMPY (CONT'D)
 Hope you all got a chance to stretch your legs and visit the privacy, 'cuzz we're ready to get back on the trail. That sound alright?

ABE
 In the colorful vernacular of you Colonials, I think the appropriate response is: "Time's a-wasting."

Prudence and Stumpy share a look as they start to load in.

In the distance, GINA (20s), stunning in her colorful red dress, rushes through the drab, bustling crowds towards the stagecoach, carrying a suitcase and parasol. A LUGGAGE PORTER scurries behind her, struggling to balance her other bags.

GINA
 (shouting to Stumpy)
 Excuse me, excuse me, sir!

STUMPY
 What's the hurry, miss?

GINA
 The gentleman at the train station said you might be going near Sulfur Springs?

STUMPY
 Yes, ma'am. It's our next stop.

GINA
 Excellent. Might I book passage with you, then?

STUMPY
 Reckon we got room for one more, if you don't mind sharing your seat with a bag o' U.S. Mail.

GINA
 The mail and I shall be dear friends by the end of our journey.

Gina smiles and motions to the Luggage Porter to come forward. El Dorado Kid, wanting to impress, reaches for Gina's nearest bag, which is heavier than it looks. The other passengers load in.

TAD
 She ain't taking my window seat, is she, Mama?

PRUDENCE

No Tad, she "isn't." There's a window for everyone. Now come along. We've got a long ride.

STUMPY

That we have, Miss Prudence. It's a full day to Sulfur Springs.

ABE

And how much farther to Tombstone, my good man?

STUMPY

Another day on top of that, if'n we don't get scalped by Injuns.

Abe turns pale. Tad is excited. Gina hands some coins to the Luggage Porter, who nods and walks away.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

I'm just funning with you, Abe. Not much Injun action in these parts since Geronimo surrendered. We'll get you all to Tombstone as sound as an old church bell.

TAD

Then we'll see Papa?

PRUDENCE

If this rickety contraption will hold, son.

Stumpy winces. He holds the door for Gina.

GINA

I thank you ever so much for accommodating me, Mister...?

STUMPY

Stumpy! Folks just call me Stumpy. That young buck riding shotgun for me is--

EL DORADO KID

(tipping his hat)

--The Eldorado Kid, at your service.

GINA

No relation to that rascal Billy the Kid, I trust?

EL DORADO KID

No 'mam, he's definitely no kin of mine. And don't let the nickname fool you neither. I assure you I'm all man.