

Dragon's Seed

SUPERIMPOSE: 1448 - TRANSYLVANIA

INT. CASTLE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Flickering shadows; firelight. Horrified SCREAMS rents the air. Outside, THUNDER crackles.

SHRIVELED MIDWIFE

Places damp cloth on the brow of a birthing woman.

The woman seizes in labor - baby emerges, bloody and matted.

MIDWIFE

swats the baby's bottom as the child opens her eyes. The midwife focuses on

BABY'S SKULL

an inverted paw -- a birthmark.

MIDWIFE

Jesu!

WOMAN IN BIRTH

Kill...it....bury..it

EXT. BUCHAREST WOODS -- NIGHT

The castle and ancient church below are bathed in moonlight. Howling wolves echo through barren winter trees.

INT. CASTLE ESCAPE TUNNEL-- CONTINUOUS

Cold damp stones laced with spider webs, well worn steps. This was the escape passage in case the castle was under attack. A door CREAKS. A light opens at top. The Midwife, carrying a squirming bundle in one hand and a torch and empty chamber pot in the other, cautiously proceeds down the steps.

A rat scurries across. She holds back a scream. She clutches a blood ruby around her neck and mumbles a prayer.

The way is poorly lit. Remains of Vlad Tepis's toys are stuffed in the niches. A skeletal hand falls out. She nearly trips and then catches herself.

The baby's chubby hand grabs at the pretty stone. She attempts to fight the baby off but the child is strong. The cord holding the stone tightens around the Midwife's neck.

A bat flies down into her face. The baby cries out. In her fright, the midwife lets go of the baby, who flips down the steps, still holding the stone. The torch goes out.

The Midwife rubs her neck painfully and then catching her breath, edges carefully down the steps.

At the bottom, she approaches the infant carefully. It does not move. She makes the sign of the cross and spits at the infant.

Trembling, she picks up the dead child and stuffs it into the empty chamber pot.

She pushes through the secret door. Winter wind howls past her singing into the open tunnel.

EXT. THE ANCIENT CHURCH YARD -- NIGHT

She emerges into the burned out church. Howling of the wolves starts up. The Midwife looks around frightened. Crossing herself again, she transverses the deserted snow covered yard to the old stone well. Her heart hammers. She throws the chamber pot containing the child into the well.

SPLASH

A low GROWL fills the air.

Midwife turns. Glints of lights...eyes...nearly a thousand... Her eyes widen in horror. The wolves leap, sending her over into the frigid darkness following the child's body.

CREDITS ROLL WITH DRAGON SEED SPELLED OUT IN WOLF TEETH.

EXT. BUCHAREST WOODS -- DAY

500 YEARS LATER --1994 -

An ancient castle dominates the distance. Remains of what was once a glorious church are nearby. In front is a sign --

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE HOME OF DRACULA HOTEL AND RESORT

A gray sky against darker clouds and a distant rumble of thunder. In the remains of the church, there a bustle of construction activity as bulldozers move ground. A cacophony of sounds as men and machines compete. Geological stratas attest to the history that has passed

A worker bulldozing dirt near the remains of a church wall hits some stone masonry. He climbs down out of the cab to take a closer look at the long dried up well uncovered by his machinery. He jabbars on his walkie talkie to the foreman and picks up a small broom to see what he has uncovered.

He is talking into the microphone as he carefully sweeps away the centuries of dirt. He hits something icy. With a smaller shovel, he loosens the object.

A COVERED CHAMBER POT

Partially frozen -- the emblem of the dragon visible.

The worker screams out something in Romanian as he steps backward, pointing at the pot.

His walkie talkie clatters to the ground as he continues retreating but he does not stop to pick it up.

The voice of the Foreman is questioning but fear has now silenced the man.

As he gets to the rise, the worker turns, sprints toward the woods.

An undercurrent of whispers.

A few curious observers edge forward. The word "prophecy" is heard. There is total silence. Even the machines stop.

Everyone stares toward the pit. The winter wind whips up.

Foreman's whistle blows, urging them back to their jobs. No one moves.

The quiet is deadly. All eyes are on the foreman as he walks over to examine the find.

He looks at the men and curses them for their primitive superstitions. He pauses at stone wall uncovered and steps forward. He sees

THE COVERED CHAMBER POT

He blanches as through the ice, he sees the emblem. He, too, begins to back out.

Some of the men throw down their tools and head for the woods. Others follow. Soon there is no one left on the site but the Foreman and PROFESSOR HYRAM NISSANU, a developer and an amateur archeologist. A bookish man in his 50's, he hurries toward the spot muttering to himself, clearly irritated about the work stoppage. He pauses on the mound just above but cannot see what the matter is.

The foreman shakes his head as he gestures wildly again toward the pot. Disgusted, shirt tail flying, a frustrated Hiram runs down the slope. He reaches

THE CHAMBER POT

and stares at it, not knowing if he should be excited at this find or worried.

He attempts to lift the lid of the pot. It's frozen solid.

THUNDER rumbles closer now; the sky darkens further. A boulder tumbles down cracking the fragile pot and surrounding ice.

Hiram stares as the mummified hand of a child falls out. She still clutches

THE RUBY

Hiram's eyes widen. He puts his hand to the stone and SCREAMS. He falls, clutching his eyes.

FOREST CLEARING - BATTLEFIELD -December 14, 1474

A cacophony of sound as horses rear and soldiers shout. VLAD TEPIS, Count Dracula, controls his mount despite the noise. The enemy is retreating. Blood is everywhere. Swords clash as men scream out.

A WILD CRY as BABURA, a priest in the Dragon's own colors, swoops down waving his gleaming sword and beheads the Prince. The sword swings....

INT. UCLA FENCING CLASS - PRESENT TIME - DAY

CLASHING SWORDS

TWO WHITE MASKED FIGURES clash swords. Suddenly one FIGHTER "spears" the other. The dominate one presses forward with fierce determination.

JESSE MARTIN

The instructor, pulls off his head gear and grabs the other player.

MARTIN

Woe. Kim. What's going on?

KIM LANDERS frees her mask, shakes her long hair loose. An understated natural beauty, her dark eyes reveal sadness.

KIM

I'm sorry, Mr. Martin.

MARTIN

This is the third time you've broken tournament rules.

(MORE)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Play fair or be disqualified. Don't
make this personal. Feel the sword
and the air around you.

KIM

Yeah. I know. I...
(glances to gallery)

STEVE MONTGOMERY

A long haired liberal complete with pony tail, Kim's boyfriend,
lounges in the stands. He gives her the peace sign and nods.
MELANIE a pretty co-ed comes up and whispers something to him.
He laughs.

KIM

(returns gaze to teacher)
I'm sorry.

MARTIN

You're one of the best. We're
preparing for the State Championship.
This could be next year's scholarship.

Kim forces a tentative smile and nods

MARTIN

(glances at boyfriend)
Remember. Leave your anger behind.
Focus on being one with the sword.

He raises his sword. Kim puts her mask on and raises hers.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS -- LATER

Kim and Steve are walking toward class. She hugs her books
possessively close to her chest. She talks without looking at
him.

KIM

So what did Melanie want?

STEVE

Um. Not much.

KIM

I said, what did she want?

STEVE

Testy.
(shrugs)
To know if we were going to the
concert tonight. Are we?

He catches up with her. She ignores him. He takes her arm. They stop - mid walk. He flips up her hair and tries to kiss her neck.

A MOLE ON HER NECK

She pulls back.

STEVE
Hey what's that?

KIM
Don't change the subject.

STEVE
No, K, I'm serious. There's something on your neck. I never saw it before. Maybe you should get it checked out.

KIM
(glares)
That's not the issue here.

STEVE
You can't be jealous?

KIM
Sometimes I think the only reason we have a relationship is because I can help you with your classes.

He shakes his head. Kisses her on the brow.

STEVE
You'll be late for history. See ya later.

INT. HISTORY CLASSROOM --AFTERNOON

PROFESSOR VALI NAS

Lean and focused, he jumps up and down, change rattling in his pocket, as he speaks excitedly.

Kim attentively takes notes.

Several kids doze; others shuffle their books getting ready for the next class.

PROFESSOR NAS
(Eastern European accent)
And they stabbed him and stabbed him and still he did not die.

The bell rings. Professor Nas looks up surprised.

PROFESSOR NAS

Okay, we finish Rasputin next week.
Some still need term paper subject.
Miss Landers, you stay, please.

General commotion of students as they scramble to leave. Kim hangs back a moment.

KIM

Professor...about the paper.

PROFESSOR NAS

Yes, I wish discuss matters about
your lineage.

KIM

My lineage? Grandfather's
accomplishments have nothing to do
with mine.

PROFESSOR NAS

(gathers folders)

No matter. We are product of our
heritage. On what will your paper
be?

KIM

I...haven't decided yet.

PROFESSOR NAS

I wish you not to failure. You would
lose your scholarship. You are
practicing your fencing, yes?

KIM

Kind of.

Professor Nas tosses her a long wood pointer from the blackboard.

On reflex, Kim grabs it and goes into fencing position as Nas grabs the other pointer. Still grasping his briefcase in one hand, he attacks.

A confused Kim dances around the attack and parries his thrust.

PROFESSOR NAS

(drops his "sword")

Passable. More practice is needed
if you are...

KIM

If I am what?

PROFESSOR NAS

I lecture at the Museum of the Supernatural today, five pm. They have an exhibit about Romania...and Dracula. You will be there.

KIM

(hoists backpack up)
Dracula, huh? That's all grandfather ever talks about....Yeah, sure.

Professor grabs his case and indicates the door.

PROFESSOR NAS

Bring him, too.

Kim glances at entrance where Steve lounges impatiently.

EXT. UCLA CAMPUS WALKWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Lost in thought, Kim hugs books to her as she walks ahead of Steve.

STEVE

Hey wait up!

He tries pulling her back toward him. She resists.

SHADOWS OVERHEAD

RAUCOUS CRY OF RAVENS

Birds flying in formation. A terrified black cat scampers in front of Kim. He slides under an ancient Volvo as the ravens swoop down attacking him.

KIM

(rushing forward)
Hey!
(waves hands)
Get away from him.

BIRDS

Ignore her.

EXT. MONASTERY AT SANGOV ISLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

The winter dead branches lay across the broken bricks as the dead leaves swirl around faster and faster and then settle atop a grave stone.

EXT. UCLA CAMPUS WALKWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

She stomps the ground and kicks out. The birds SQUAWK rushing to get away from her foot.

One in particular turns a malevolent eye at Kim, glinting at her. It SQUAWKS in a commanding tone. The birds stop attacking the cat. Robotic like, they turn in formation and fly off.

STEVE
(laid back awe)
Wow! Like they listened to you.

Ignoring him, she bends down and looks under the car.

KIM
Come on sweetie! Come on.

The cat mews.

Kim rummages in her backpack. She grabs a piece of cheese from her lunch and offers it.

Slowly the scrawny cat edges forward from under the car. Steve grabs him.

KIM
(takes cat)
Poor baby.
(feeds him the cheese as he
nestles onto her neck.)
I won't let anyone hurt you, Othello.

She cuddles the cat as they walk. A frustrated Steve picks up her backpack.

STEVE
(dances in front)
Wait. We can't take him home.

KIM
(walks, holding cat)
Why not?

STEVE
Because...because our lease doesn't
allow us pets.

KIM
He's not a pet. We'll find him a
good home and..

The cat settles in her arms. They walk to Steve's car just down the hill.

STEVE
Uh, hello, don't I have any say?

KIM
(grins)
Yeah. You can drive.

INT. STEVE'S BEATEN UP YELLOW TOYOTA - SHORT TIME LATER

On the way back to their Westwood apartment, Othello PURRS on her lap.

Steve tries to put his arm around her. Othello HISSSES.

STEVE
Cool it, cat. She's mine. So you're going to hear the professor tonight?

KIM
Gotta. It's my grade. You know I have to keep A's for my scholarship. Mom certainly isn't going to help me.

STEVE
Yeah I know, but I already promised Melanie.

KIM
Oh right. Melanie.

STEVE
Do I detect a hint of jealousy?
(she glares)
Okay. Fine. I won't go.

KIM
No you go.
(beat)
I think I'm going to get a job. I have a lighter load this term and...

STEVE
You could always baby sit. Beth does.

KIM
Not steady enough.

STEVE
There's nothing at all left from your dad?

Kim tears up. Shakes her head.

KIM

She let Barrie invest it.

Her hands clench white on the dash as he makes a turn into the underground parking of their apartment. He helps her out as she holds the cat. She walks over to her own blue HONDA and gets in.

STEVE

You could always come to the party later. All you do is study or worry about your mom.

KIM

Maybe... later...I need to practice for the tournament. I'll be home after the lecture.

(kisses him; hands over the cat)
Take Othello upstairs and find him some milk.

STEVE

You okay that I'm not going to this lecture. I mean this Dracula stuff is horse shit.

KIM

Tell that to my grandfather.

(gets in her car)

I promise, if it's not too late,
I'll see you at Melanie's.

EXT. MUSEUM OF THE SUPERNATURAL -- EARLY EVENING

With signs touting the Dracula - Romanian heritage exhibit much like the King Tut exhibit of the late 70's.

INT. MUSEUM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Banner reads:

ENTER DRACULA'S LAIR..IF YOU DARE

A placard to the right of the entrance reads:

DR. V. NAS, DRACULA: MAN AND MYTH 5 PM.

Clock ticks off 4:58 as Kim slips into the filled auditorium. Walks down checking the full rows. The only empty aisle seat is 2nd row near front. A pretty pre-teen 11 year old ALEXZANDRA GONTIF, who already knows how to turn charm on and off, occupies the seat next to her.

KIM:

Okay if I sit here?

ALEXZANDRA
 (irritated)
 I don't...

Their eyes meet - lock - for a moment. Kim turns away, startled by the intensity in Alexzandra's eyes.

ALEXZANDRA
 (breaks into a smile)
 You must be Kim. I'm Alexzandra Gontif. Pleased to meet you. That's my mother.
 (points to front row)
 And up there is my pseudo-uncle.

KIM
 Big words for a young lady.

ALEXZANDRA
 (shrugs)
 Only child.

Alex smiles knowingly and puts a finger to her lips as Nas mounts the podium. Around the mock castellated room are gargoyles and holographic screaming heads, which stop as he talks. Holograph portrait of a bull-necked man with hooded dark eyes and drooping mustache wearing a feather in his cap appears. Below it floats 1431-1476.

PROFESSOR NAS
 Dracula, or Drakuyla, translates as devil or dragon, both of which Vlad Tepis, Prince of Wallachia, could have been said to be. A hero and anti-hero to his people, he was both loved for his defeat of the Turks and hated for his cruel and inhuman punishments.

He paces across the stage as he indicates the posts on which Tepis impaled some of his victims.

Kim shivers.

PROFESSOR NAS
 Killed on the battlefield, perhaps by his own men, his body was said to be buried at the Lake Snagov island monastery but his head..disappeared. Some say to prevent his return.
 (beat)
 When opened, the coffin had no body.

ALEXZANDRA

But he will return one day, won't
he, Professor?

The professor seems suddenly ill at ease.

LAURA GONTIF, Alex's strikingly attractive mother - polished
to the T's in a glamorous suit, glances back at her, frowning.

PROFESSOR NAS

Yes.

(looks directly at Kim)

It is foretold that when his head is
reunited with his body, he will return
to walk in the daylight. But only
his natural child can perform that
task.

KIM

(rolls eyes)

Kind of hard for him to have a child,
Professor. I mean it's been over
500 years.

PROFESSOR NAS

Exactly my dear. However, the Impaler
was an expert of the black arts.

ALEXZANDRA

How will the child be known?

LAURA

Alexzandra!

Alexzandra glares back. Even though she is obviously angry,
Laura's voice is soft spoken and modulated.

ALEXZANDRA

(attitude)

Mother!

Kim inhales sharply at the obvious disrespect and looks away.

LAURA

shrugs it off with a wave of her diamond ringed hand.

A woman a few rows away hisses.

WOMAN #1

(finger wagging)

When I was a young girl...

Alexzandra glares at the woman with malevolence in her eyes.

KIM
(attempts to distract)
Shh! We'll miss this.

A few seconds later, the woman gathers her purse and belongings and gets out of her seat. She moves up near the top of the auditorium.

THE WOMAN'S FOOT

slips on a stair. She SCREAMS as she tumbles down.

The crowd freezes in horror.

She lands at Laura Gontif's feet, her eyes wide open.

Kim gets out of her seat and bends down near the woman trying to take a pulse.

PROFESSOR NAS
Leave her alone, Kim. You don't
want to do the wrong thing. Someone
get the medics, please.

AT THE TOP OF AUDITORIUM

Several people rush out.

Laura glances at her daughter for a long moment and then looks away. Alexzandra's face is expressionless.

KIM
(quietly)
Professor, I think she's dead.

Nearby audience GASPS as paramedics rush in. They load the body on a stretcher. Audience members crane to see the action.

MAN IN AUDIENCE
Is she going to be okay?

The paramedic shrugs as they carry the body out.

EXT. MONASTERY AT SANGOV ISLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

Eddies of leaves seem animated as they dance on the grave, a few settle into the cracks, almost if they are trying to pry the stone loose.

INT. MUSEUM CAFETERIA - SHORT TIME LATER

Kim, Professor Nas, Laura and Alex are eating. Alexzandra sits near Kim, staring at her.

KIM
Why are you looking at me like that,
Alexzandra?

ALEX
(shrugs)
I didn't expect you to be so pretty.

Kim looks at the professor questioning.

PROFESSOR NAS
You are my best student.

ALEX
Mommy, I want Kim to be my nanny.
(hand over Kim's)
Will you?

LAURA
You're bothering the poor girl, Alex.
Emma is a perfectly able nanny.

ALEX
(eyes narrow)
I don't care. She's not like us.
(hand on Kim's)
I want Kim. And Kim likes me. Don't
you?

KIM
Uh, yeah. I guess. I mean sure.
You seem like a sweet kid but to be
a nanny...

ALEX
Well I'm not letting you leave me.
We belong together.

Uncomfortable, Kim is at a loss for words.

LAURA
Please. We can't just dismiss the
woman because you don't like her.
End of discussion, Alex.

ALEX
Well, it's not like she's going to
be around a lot longer.

LAURA
(warning note)
Alex.

Alex shrugs and smiles, her hand glued onto Kim's, swinging
back and forth.

KIM

She needs a nanny at 11?

LAURA

(shrugs)

Well, you know, not really a nanny.
As a single mother, it's hard for me
to work and pick her up from school,
help with the homework and take care
of the little things.

KIM

I see.

Kim glances at Alex who has suddenly broken away and gone to
the wall to wall window.

Her face press against the glass as she watches the birds in
the garden.

EXT. MUSEUM CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Ravens have flown down to eat crumbs. One of them looks up.
It's eyes glint. It flies off.

INT. GONTIF BRENTWOOD HOME - ALEX'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As a prim and proper EMMA NICHOLSON goes into the bedroom
carrying clean laundry.

Alex's room is part frilly pink princess and part gothicy with
pictures of Dracula and castles decorating one side of the
room.

On the bed is a huge stuffed wolf.

EMMA

puts down clean clothes and mutters to herself as she picks up
dirty clothes thrown on the floor and books left half open.
She closes books.

THE OPEN WINDOW

A breeze sways the curtains.

VOICE

Emma...Emma

She walks over to the window and peers out.

EXT. GONTIF BRENTWOOD HOME -- EARLY EVENING

The phone line outside has first one raven, then another, and
then another .. all lined up until there are twenty or more

swaying on the line. The lead raven SQUAWKS and they fly like bombardiers toward the window attacking Emma.

She SCREAMS.