

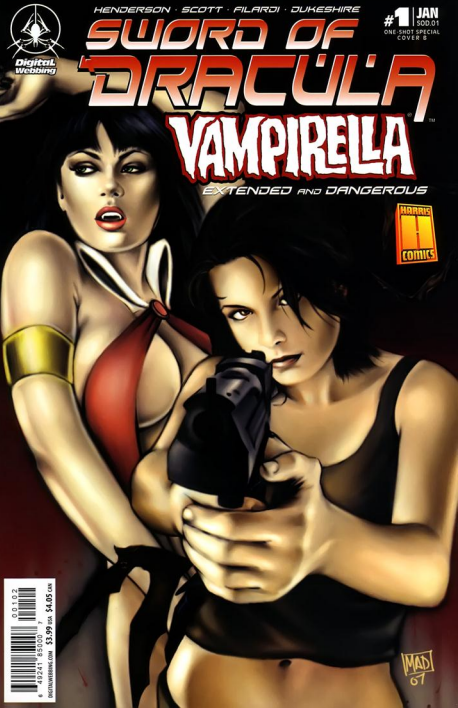


HENDERSON · SCOTT · FILARDI · DUKESHIRE

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ONE SHOT SPECIAL
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SWORD OF DRACULA VAMPIRELLA

EXTENDED AND DANGEROUS



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DECEMBER

VISIONS OF BLOODRAYNE -
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JANUARY

SWORD OF DRACULA/VAMPIRELLA -
BLOODRAYNE: AUTOMATON -
DARK 48 #1 -
FIST OF JUSTICE #1 -

FEBRUARY

BLOODRAYNE: PRIME CUTS #1 -
BLOODRAYNE VOL 2 TP -
PUNKS THE COMIC LE SIGNED -

MARCH

BLOODRAYNE: PRIME CUTS #2 -
DARK 48 #2 -

APRIL

BLOODRAYNE: TOKYO ROGUE #1
FIST OF JUSTICE #2



SWORD OF DRACULA

RONNIE VAN HELSING returned from life in the private sector to become the ground executive of the POLIDORIUM, a multinational organization sponsored by the United States and led by the United Nations. Her headquarters: Denver, Colorado.

Ronnie's family life is in a shambles. She has one sister, a US Attorney, who barely speaks to her, a traumatized brother in a monastery, an evil sister long dead in a car explosion, a good sister dead with her.

Ronnie immediately focused the resources of the Polidorium on pursuing DRACULA, Vlad IV, the unparalleled 15th-century war criminal, Lord of the Vampires, and terrorist. Vlad is the most dangerous terrorist on earth, capable of putting down stakes and destroying thousands of mortals at a time. However, he is just one of the vampire clan leaders.

Ronnie has captured Dracula once since joining the Polidorium, but had to set him free in exchange for his assistance in defeating a threat from the ancient demons called the NEPHILIM.

Since then, Dracula and Ronnie have circled their organizations around one another. She is tracking his movements, his money, and his allies. Ronnie will stop him, one mission at a time, whatever it takes.

Now Ronnie sees an opening—the disaffected employee of a new underworld rival to Dracula called THE CURATOR.



DIGITAL WEBBING PRESENTS "SWORD OF DRACULA / VAMPIRELLA : EXTENDED AND DANGEROUS"

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STORY BY JASON HENDERSON ART BY GREG SCOTT COLORED BY NICK FILARDI

LETTERED BY ED DUKESHIRE PROOFED BY KEVIN MELROSE

COVER A BY TONY HARRIS COVER B BY MICHAEL DiPASCALE



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AUDIO TRANSCRIPT:
INTERVIEWEE---RONNIE
VAN HELSING, SPECIAL
AGENT IN CHARGE.

THAT'S RIGHT, MAM--
ALL THE SUDDEN
MARCUS HAD BLOOD
ON HIS CHIN.

WE WERE NEARLY
GONE. WE WERE CUT
ALREADY, WAITING
FOR EVAC.

IT HAD NOT
BEEN EASY.

BADY WAS CUT BAD
BUT HER WOUNDS
WERE BANDAGED.

SHE WAS THE ONE
I WAS WORRIED
ABOUT, AND THEN---

MARCUS---

YOU'RE
BLEEDING.

I'M
WHAT?

ONE
DROP.

I WATCHED
IT FALL.

LIKE A
BLASTING
CAP.



WE'VE
BEEN
CLEAN.

WE KILLED TWO VAMPIRES
ON THIS TRAIN AND NO ONE
NOTICED A THING.

ONE DROP OF BLOOD LANDS,
AND STRAHS ANOTHER IN THE
FREAKIN' PAINT--AND ANOTHER.



CRAP.

ONE DROP--AND
SOMETHING AWAKENS.



I HEAR GLASS POPPING
OUT AS HE COMES ALIVE--
WHIPS OF BLOOD CRAWLING,
SEARCHING, TASTING.



THE THINGS
HE CAN DO.

WITH BLOOD.

EVAC, THIS
IS VAN HELSING,
WE HAVE AWAKENED
THE QUARRY, REPEAT,
WE HAVE AWAKENED
THE QUARRY!
MOVE!

**48 HOURS EARLIER:
WASHINGTON, DC.**

EXCUSE
ME?

SO
THIS IS THE
OFFICIAL SECRET
MEETING BENCH,
RIGHT?

YOU
GONNA TELL
ME WHO DID
KENNEDY?

DON'T BE
ABSRD, AGENT
VAN HELSING.

I UNDERSTAND YOU
HAVE AN INTEREST
IN THE PLAYER
KNOWN AS THE
CURATOR.

CURATORY
CONCUBINE OF
DRACULA,
RIGHT?

A SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP,
AT THE VERY
LEAST.

IS SHE A
VAMPIRE?

WE DON'T THINK
SO. MORE LIKE A
CONSULTANT.

SO
WHAT'S
NEW?

THE CURATOR
AND DRACULA HAVE
BROKEN UP, AND
THE CURATOR HAS
DISAPPEARED. SHE
MAY BE DEAD.

A VAMPIRE
NAMED FREDDY,
WHO WORKED FOR THE
CURATOR, HAS TURNED
UP ON THE MARKET.

DRACULA
HAS TAKEN THIS FREDDY
INTO HIS ORGANIZATION.
THEY'RE MOVING HIM TO A
SAFE HOUSE IN WYOMING
FOR DEBRIEFING AND
RETRAINING.

SO YOU
GOING TO JUST
STAND THERE, OR
ARE YOU GOING TO
WRITE DOWN WHAT
TRAIN HE'S ON?

WYOMING.

OKAY,
GANG.



HERE'S
THE
SITCH.

DRACULA
IS IN THE LAST
CAR. WE ARE
NOT ENGAGING
HIM TODAY.

THE WITNESS
IS IN A BERTH IN
THE FRONT. HE
WILL LIKELY HAVE
LIGHT GUARDS.

ABRAHAM SHARP

TAKE OUT
THE GUARDS
AND GET BACK
UP TOP.

NOW
LISTEN: THIS IS A
DRACULA TRAIN, THAT
MEANS NO MORTAL
BLOOD SPILLED, OR
YOU'LL GET OFF---
WELL, EVERYTHING.

YOU
BLEED, SUCK
IT YOURSELF.

RONNIE VAN Helsing



YECH.

MARCUS KWAN

BADI NASCIMENTO



LET'S GO.




I HAVEN'T REALLY BEEN
A LOT OF THINGS. I WAS
A STUDENT, A RESCUE
SKIER, AND THIS.

I THINK I'M
GONNA STICK
WITH THIS.



WE LAND ON A
MOVING TRAIN,
DEAD-SOLID
PERFECT. ABE
TAUGHT US THIS.



WE'RE IN THROUGH THE ROOF
AND ON FOOT IN 35 SECONDS.

IT TAKES THE GUARD
VAMPS JUST A SECOND
OR TWO LONGER.



BAOOOM!!

GUARDIAN VAMPIRES,
THE KIND YOU STICK IN
FRONT OF A DOOR, ARE
BASICALLY ZOMBIES.

BUT
THEY'RE
FAST.

FWISH!

BADI STAKES HER ATTACKER
EVEN AS HE TAKES A DIME-SIZED
CHUNK OUT OF HER NECK.



FWOOSH!

THIS KIND OF BITE
WILL FESTER AND
COOK FOR DAYS. WITH
TREATMENT, IT'S NOT
FATAL. BUT IT HURTS.

BADI SLAPS A STICKY
BANDAGE ON THE CUT
WITHIN SECONDS. AS
ORDERED, NOT A DROP
HITS THE DECK.



CLIK

FREDDY THE WITNESS IS
STUPID ENOUGH TO EMERGE.



YOU'RE
COMING
WITH US.

AND JUST
LIKE THAT,
WE'VE GOT
HIM.

AIR SUPPORT'S
ON THE WAY,
RON.

WHEN WE'RE UP
ON THE ROOF WAITING
FOR THE CHOPPER,
WE'RE FEELING GOOD.

YOUR AGENT HAS
A NOSEBLEED.
YOU BROUGHT A
HEMOPHILIAC ON
THIS TRAIT.

YOU'RE
STUMPER THAN
YOU LOOK.

SOMEWHERE--

--SOMETHING
OLD AWAKENS.

THE MAN THE
TURKS CALLED
KASISLI BEY.

HOSTAGE OF
SULTAN MEHMED
AND HERO OF
POPE PIUS II.

STRATEGIST
AND SCHEMER
WITHOUT PEER.

BAR

BOOM

MURDERER BY
IMPALEMENT OF OVER
30,000 OF HIS OWN
COUNTRYMEN IN ONE
DAY.

PRINCE OF
DARKNESS.

YOU KNOW
THE NAME.



I HEAR A CRACK, AND
A HARDENED TRAIN
SHELL BURSTS OPEN,
HEMMORASHING.

Fwoosh!!



YOU'VE MADE
A MISTAKE,
VERONICA.

OUR
ALLIANCE HAS
ENDED.

IT STARTS
TO RAIN.

AND WITH THE
THOUGHT OF THE
MASTER, THE
RAIN HARDENS---

RONNIE---
THE RAIN IS---
AIEE!



SLICING AS
IT FALLS---

**THWAP
THWAP
THWAP**

**THUNK
THUNK**

**THUNK
THUNK**

**THUNK
THUNK
THUNK**

BOOM!!

THE NEXT FEW
MOMENTS RUN
TOGETHER IN
SNATCHES—

VAMPIRES POUR OUT
AS FAST AS WE COULD
UNLOAD ON THEM—

AKBRAK!! BK!!

NAILS OF RAIN
FALLING HARD
AND FAST IN
THE WIND—

I FEEL
MY CHEEK
OPEN UP
AND
GUSH—

EVEN NOW
I FEEL HIM
GRABBING
FOR IT.

BAD! THERE'S
TOO MUCH V-BLOOD
IN THE AIR-- DON'T
GET TOO CLOSE TO
THAT GUY WHEN HE
GOES!

MAN!
ALL BECAUSE
OF A DAMN
NOSEBLEED.

DRACULA SAYS NOTHING.
HE GRABS THE BLOOD IN
THE AIR AND WRAPS A CORD
OF IT AROUND MY NECK.

BAD! I'VE
THE VAMPIRE
BEHIND HER—

Fwoosh!!

--AND THE RED
MIST AROUND HER
GOES UP LIKE
HYDRAULIC FLUID.

AYE EEE!



I HEAR BADI'S
FINAL GURGLE
AS HER BODY
BLOWS OFF THE
TRAIN AND THUDS
BEHIND US--

I NEVER
WANTED
THIS.

TOO MUCH
BLOOD-- IN THE
AIR, AROUND
MY NECK--



ONE SHOT--

BLOODWOOD
ASH GRENADE--

KICK AWAY,
HURRY--



HURRY.

I FEEL THE GROUND SLAM
INTO ME-- METAL AND
BLOOD RAINING IN HARD
NAILS EVEN AS A WAVE OF
ASH OVERTAKES IT.

I'M BLEEDING AND
ALIVE AND FADING
TO BLACK--

AND DRACULA IS
LAUGHING, AND DRACULA
IS GROWLING IN PAIN, AND
DRACULA IS GONE.

AND BADI
IS GONE.

**A WEEK LATER,
NEW YORK CITY
GRAND CENTRAL
STATION**

OUR TRAIN
PULLS IN
AT 7 PM.

YOU SEE
ANYTHING?

NOT A THING.
LET'S GET
THE WITNESS
MOVING.

SO FAR I SEE
STUDENTS,
TOURISTS,
BUSINESSMEN.

SO FAR I SEE
NO VAMPIRES.

ABE TOOK A HIT
THAT NEARLY TORE
HIS NOSE OFF.

ADDING INSULT
TO INJURY, THE
HOSPITAL SHAVED
OFF HIS MIGHTY
FINE SIDEBURNS.

ALL CLEAR,
ABE.

FREDDY?

NOT A SCRATCH.

YOU
GUYS ALL
THERE
IS?

YOU
UNDERSTAND
HOW MANY
PEOPLE WANT
TO GRAB
ME?

DO I GOTTA
HIT YA AGAIN,
FREDDY?

CAN I HIT
HIM?

JUST
ONCE?

ONLY
ABE GETS TO
STRIKE THE
WITNESS,
MARCUS.

WHY
DOES HE
GET THE FUN
JOB?

NOT TO WORRY,
FREDDY. WE GOT
YOU THIS FAR. WE'LL
GET YOU TO OUR SAFE
HOUSE. JUST DO WHAT
WE SAY AND
EVERYTHING WILL
GO FINE.

WE'VE BEEN
BABYSITTING THIS
GEEK NON-STOP
SINCE WE
NABBED HIM.

WE BANTER.
WE DON'T TALK
ABOUT BAD.
NOT YET.





WHY AM I STILL IN HANDCUFFS? YOU SAID I WOULDN'T BE CONSTRAINED ANYMORE.

ABB, IS IT ME, OR HAS THIS GUY DONE NOTHING BUT COMPLAIN FOR THE PAST WEEK?



HEY. I WORKED FOR THE CURATOR. I WAS SONNA WORK FOR THE BIG D. YOU THINK I'M INTIMIDATED BY YOU GUYS?



IT ALSO OCCURS TO ME WE REALLY SHOULD HAVE GIVEN HIM A BATH.

VAMPIRES DON'T BATHE, REMEMBER? THAT'S WHY THE HOT ONES SMELL LIKE PURELL.

THE "HOT ONE?"

HEY, MARCUS, WALK WITH ME-- I THINK I SAW SOMETHING.



YEAH, IT'S ABB. WE'RE ON THE WAY TO THE VAN. I NEED THE NEXT TRANSPORT TO BE WAITING IN BATTERY PARK-- WE DON'T WANNA SPEND MUCH TIME ON THE TRANSFER.

HEY-- SO WHAT THE HECK IS THIS COLLAR YOU PUT ON ME SUPPOSED TO DO?



HEEEERE WE GO.



HEY, LADY.

I RECOGNIZE SOME OF THESE GUYS-- DRACULA CLAN, NEW YORK CITY. ONE WEEK WE'VE ALL BEEN RECOVERATING AND NO ONE MAKES A MOVE. NOW THEY'RE OSTENTATIONOUSLY APPROACHING ME IN A TRAIN STATION.

YOU GUYS OUT FOR A WALK?



HEY, RON-- ANY PROBLEMS OVER HERE?

BRINGING DRACULA SOMETHING HE WANTS WOULD MAKE THESE VAMPS, BUT THEY WON'T DO ANYTHING HERE.

BUT SUDDENLY I'M WISHING WE HAD JUST DEBRIEFED THE TOOTH IN THE HOSPITAL.



NO PROBLEMS. JUST A FEW PUNKS.



OKAY, HEH--HERE'S WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN. YOU'RE GONNA LET US SIDDLE UP TO OUR PAL FREDDY.

AND FREDDY AND US ARE GONNA TAKE A WALK, AND THERE'S NOT GONNA BE A FUSS--



--BECAUSE WE DO IT HERE, IT'S ALL NICE. IF WE DO IT LATER--IT'S REALLY, REALLY LESS NICE.



REALLY?
REALLY.

YEAH, 'CAUSE AT THIS POINT I USUALLY DO ACTUALLY HAND OVER THE WITNESS.



WE'RE BEING WATCHED--
SOMEONE IN THE UPPER LEVEL. IS THAT--



--'ELLAT
\$0.00!

WHY THE HELL IS SHE IN MANHATTAN? IF SHE GETS ANY CLOSER, ASIDE FROM THE BUSINESS AT HAND, I GOTTA TELL HER I'M STILL TICKED ABOUT THE PARTY IN WYOMING. BUT THEN I GUESS I SHOULDN'T GIVE HER THE SATISFACTION--SHE SHOULD KNOW THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT JUST DON'T COME OUT OF A CARPET.

SO, GOSH, I GUESS IT'S GONNA BE THE HARD WAY, FELLAS. SEE YA 'ROUND.



I AMN'T GETTIN' IN NO ARMORED CAR. I DON'T LIKE CONFINED SPACES.

WE'LL KEEP YOU COMPANY, FREDDY.

MR. TOOTH, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE VERY COMFORTABLE. NOW PLEASE WATCH YOUR HEAD, OKAY, ABE, YOU DRIVE.

BUT I--

ABE.

I'LL DRIVE.

WE PULL
OUT WITHOUT
INCIDENT.

UNIDENTIFIABLE
"ABS, ABS, ABS."
NEXT TIME WE'LL SEE
YOU DRIVING IN \$\$\$\$
MANHATTAN.

WEST SIDE HIGHWAY IS ACTUALLY NO
BIG DEAL—SMOOTH SAILING ALL THE
WAY TO BATTERY PARK, WHERE OUR
WATER TRANSPORT WILL BE WAITING
BEHIND WORLD FINANCIAL.

AND JUST WHEN IT'S ALL
PERFECT, A GARBAGE
TRUCK COMES UP
BEHIND US AT A LIGHT—

AND GIVES
US A LIFT.

CLUNKKASH!

I KNOW WE'RE IN TROUBLE WHEN I
HEAR THE GRATE OF METAL, THE
FORKLIFT UNDER THE REINFORCED
CHASSIS—WHEELS SPINNING.

TRY TO ACCOUNT FOR
EVERYTHING...

VRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

SUUST
SET
DOWN!

POOF POOF

I HEAR ARMOR-PIERCING ROUNDS
SLICING THROUGH THE TRUCK'S EXTERIOR.
A CONCUSSION GRENADE LANDS
INSIDE THE LAYERS OF THE DOOR AND
BOOM! MY EARS GO NUTS.



WE KICK THE DOORS OPEN AND THEY CLATTER OFF THEIR HINGES. I CAN'T HEAR MYSELF YELL.

I'LL TAKE THE LEFT! YOU TAKE THE RIGHT!

AT FIRST I THINK THESE MIGHT BE VAMPIRES IN FULL-BODY COVERINGS. BUT THE WAY THEY MOVE—THESE ARE HUMANS. MERCOS WHO WORK FOR DRACULA.



SIRENS—COPS ARE COMING ALREADY. THE ATTACKERS TURN IMMEDIATELY TO NEUTRALIZE THEM.

AS THE COP CAR EXPLODES, I SEE A BIKE COME FROM NOWHERE, BURSTING THROUGH THE FLAMES—A SALAMANDER ON WHEELS.



I WATCH THE MERCOS STOP—

—MOMENTARILY CONFUSED BY THIS NEW PLAYER.



AND THAT'S ALL THE DISTRACTION MARCUS NEEDS TO JUMP. TWO GUYS WITH GUNS ARE NOTHING—JUST BONES.

AND I'M KICKING MYSELF BECAUSE THE BLAST IN THE DOOR STILL HAS ME SWAYING.



THEODORE,
TAKE CARE OF
THIS
MOSQUITO.



THE BIKE TAKES A HIT RIGHT
IN THE TANK. I SEE THE RIDER
GET BLOWN BACK AND AWAY.



ALL RIGHT,
THEN.



AND THEN OUT OF THE
FIRE, THE RIDER--AND
NOW I KNOW WHO SHE
IS--DOES A TOTAL
ROBERT PATRICK.



GENTLEMEN.



SHE MOVES FAST. I'VE SEEN
FEW PEOPLE SHORT OF
DRACULA MOVE LIKE HER.



THIS KICK

QUICK

THIS WOULD BE
LIKE CATCHING A
BUG IN THE RIBS.

Y'LLA GOES THROUGH THESE THUGS LIKE THEY'RE MADE OF CHEESECAKE.

ON TOP OF THAT, SHE'S A VAMPIRE—SO SHE'S FASTER, SMARTER AND SEXIER THAN YOU, ALWAYS.

THIS DOESN'T KEEP THE MERCS FROM TRYING, THOUGH.

KLIK

YOU MUST BE JOKING.

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU.

JUST A GIRL WITH A BUSTED BIKE AND SOME REALLY LONG KNIVES.

YOU'VE LOST A GREAT DEAL OF BLOOD—

BUT WHY? WHY IS SHE SAVING US?

LET ME HELP YOU.

SLURP

OKAY.

DROP IT, 'Y'LLA. NO JOKE. DO IT NOW.

OR THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF YOU BUT A BUNCH OF DUST AND A SOUND I LIKE TO SPELL "FWOOSH!"

SILVER-JACKETED HAWTHORN BULLETS.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE WYOMING.



IF THIS
IS ABOUT THE
RAG, I SAID I
WAS SORRY.

I'M HERE
FOR FREDDY
THE TOOTH.

OHHH.
WELL, I CAN'T
TELL YOU HOW
MUCH THAT'S
NOT GONNA
HAPPEN.

I HAVE
NO IDEA WHAT
YOU'RE TALKING
ABOUT. NOW WHAT
ARE YOU DOING
HERE?



WHO'S THIS? HE SEEMS
LIKE A HIGHER CLASS OF
MAN THAN I RECALL YOU
WORKING WITH.

YOU DON'T
KNOW THE
HALF OF IT,
SISTER.



A HIGHER
CLASS? WHO
THE HELL--

WE REALLY
NEEDN'T FIGHT. MY
CLIENT--A PLAYER I THINK
YOU CALL THE CURATOR--
VERY MUCH WANTS THIS
VAMPIRE BACK. I HAVE MY
REASONS TO SEE THOSE
WISHES GRANTED.



VERONICA
MAY BE A
DIFFICULT LADY,
BUT I CAN TELL
BY YOUR
EYES--

YOU'RE A
SENSITIVE
MAN.

FFFT--



HELLO?
YOU KNOW I'M,
LIKE, STANDING
RIGHT HERE.






IT TAKES ME AT LEAST A MINUTE TO STEAL A CAR--SOMETHING I HAVEN'T DONE SINCE MY SISTER FRANKIE DIED. WE FOUND HER FADING FAST IN A FOOTBALL FIELD NEAR OUR HOUSE. AS WE DROVE FRANKIE TO THE HOSPITAL, MY SISTER JUDITH PRETENDED SHE KNEW NOTHING.

GOOD TIMES.



THE COLLAR ON FREDDY IS A BUG AND HOMING DEVICE, AMONG OTHER THINGS--SO I CATCH UP TO THEM QUICKLY. 'ELLA IS BEING NONE TOO EASY ON FREDDY.



AS I EXPECTED, SOON THEY MAKE A RENDEZVOUS. THERE'S A CROWD OF VAMPIRES HANGING OUT UNDER A BRIDGE, AND THEY TAKE FREDDY IMMEDIATELY.

I HEAR 'ELLA SAY:

SO YOU HAVE YOUR MAN. WHERE IS THE LITTLE GIRL?



I'M TRYING TO PROCESS THIS WHEN SUDDENLY THEY'RE HANDING A LITTLE GIRL OVER TO 'ELLA.

SO THAT'S THE DEAL. 'ELLA STOLE OUR WITNESS AND HANDED HIM OVER BECAUSE SHE'S BEEN TASKED WITH SAVING A PRISONER--SOMEONE'S DAUGHTER.



WELCOME BACK TO THE CURATOR'S EMPLOY, FREDDY.



IT AIN'T GONNA LAST LONG.




I DIDN'T EITHER.



DAYS IN THE HOSPITAL SAW TO THAT.

AS THE BIKE REVS I WONDER WHO THE GIRL BELONGS TO. WHOEVER THE CURATOR IS, SHE PLAYS WELL. I DOUBT EVEN DRACULA HAD A CHANCE TO DEBRIEF FREDDY.



NOW, AS REASONS FOR STEALING A WITNESS GO, 'ELLA'S IS PRETTY GOOD.

SO I'LL LET IT SLIDE. I FLIP A SWITCH AND FREDDY'S COLLAR EXPLODES, SAVING HIM A FEW DAYS OF TORTURE AT THE HANDS OF HIS FORMER EMPLOYERS. SERVICES RENDERED.

SO LONG, FREDDY.

FREDDY WOULD HAVE BEEN A MAJOR SCORE. I MUST HAVE SPENT \$300,000 GOING AFTER HIM.

AND I LOST BADI NASCIMENTO.

JUST TO ANSWER ONE QUESTION--

WHO IS THE CURATOR?

I HEAR A MINI PULL UP.



HEY, RON.

YOU OKAY?

FREDDY'S DEAD. WE LOST OUR OPPORTUNITY.



...
LOOK, RON. FREDDY WAS A BONUS WHEN WE PICKED HIM UP. SOME THINGS JUST AREN'T MEANT TO STICK.

BONUS. YEAH.

BONUS. WE GOT VAMPIRES TO WORRY ABOUT. WHO CARES ABOUT A WITCH LIKE THIS CURATOR ANYWAY.

IF THE FAMILIES CARE-- IF ~~DEACON~~ CARES-- I CARE.



I'M TAKING YOUR CAR. FILL UP THE BEEMER AND PUT IT BACK WHERE I STOLE IT, OKAY?

**MEANWHILE,
SUTTON PLACE
APARTMENT
BELONGING TO
THE CURATOR.**

WHAT
HAVE YOU
GOT FOR
ME?

FREDDY'S
DEAD. WE DON'T
THINK HE GAVE UP
ANY INFORMATION
BEFORE HE
DIED.

WHO
KILLED
HIM?

VERONICA
VAN
HELINGS.

VAMPIRELLA
STOLE FREDDY,
TRADED HIM BACK TO
US FOR THE HOSTAGE
WE STOLE, AND THEN
VAN HELINGS BLEW HIM
OUT FROM UNDER
US.

SHE MUST
HAVE JUST
HATED
THAT.

I REALLY
COULDN'T SAY,
MA'AM.

ANYWAY, FREDDY'S
CATALOG OF YOUR
HOLDINGS REMAINS
SECURE. WE'LL NEED TO
FIND ANOTHER COMPUTER
GENIUS TO FINISH WHAT HE
ALREADY ENCODED,
HOWEVER.

SO HARD TO
FIND A GOOD,
CORRUPT GEEK
THESE DAYS.

I BELIEVE
VAN HELINGS
THINKS HE WAS A
BOOKKEEPER.

JUST AS
WELL.

AHHH, WHAT
I WOULDN'T GIVE
TO SEE RONNIE'S FACE
RIGHT NOW. SHE'S SO FULL
OF HERSELF THAT SHE'S
ONLY REALLY ENJOYABLE
WHEN SHE DOESN'T
UNDERSTAND WHAT'S
GOING ON.

BUT
IT'S TOO EARLY
FOR HER TO KNOW
THAT HER DEAR,
HATED SISTER
JUDITH—

—IS
ALIVE.

END. FOR NOW.

TALIA SUNT

by JASON HENDERSON & GREG SCOTT



Welcome back and welcome to **SWORD OF DRACULA/VAMPIRELLA** #1! It's been awhile since Ed, Greg and I have played in this sandbox, and I wanted to share some thoughts about the story and art you see here.

RETURNING TO SWORD OF DRACULA

Black Hawk Dracula. Dracula: Impossible. Dracula, the Osama Bin Laden of vampires. Sword of Dracula is a world of high-octane vampire-commando thrills. If we're not steering back to that, we're missing it. There's the Dracula you know, and there's SOD Dracula: war criminal, master vampire, world destroyer, blood controller.

To me the opening sequence of *Sword of Dracula/Vampirella* #1 was like a breath of fresh air—it meant we were returning to our original team and the kind of business that the original SOD series was all about. So here we

start the story with a gag right out of *Mission: Impossible*, with the gang just barely getting away before a single drop of blood falls and sets off the alarms on the train. They were supposed to grab a witness, and now it's all gone wrong.

There's nothing like a bunch of vampire hunters dropping from the sky onto a train to say that this is a different kind of vampire story. *Sword of Dracula* has always been about doing stories that are not like any Dracula story you've seen. SOD Dracula's powers are such that he can use blood as a weapon, whether it's in you or spilling around you.

It was Greg's idea to have the blood drops flying around the air like knives, but I love it, and I love that Ronnie has to blow up an anti-vampire grenade that nearly kills her and her people, just to get away.





ON WORKING WITH GREG SCOTT

Just as publisher/letterer/all-around smart guy Ed Dukeshire has been part of the SOD team since the start, Greg Scott was there at the beginning. He was the one who gave Ronnie her bob haircut and defined the "Black Hawk Dracula" look. In truth, I've really enjoyed seeing different artists interpret these characters. I liked the manga style favored by William "James Fry" Belk, and the cartoon style of Terry Pallot. But Greg's art is the style fans liked the most for these characters, and interestingly, the issues Greg drew, he says, still get him work.

Of course, a few of these pages (in an altered form) had been seen before in *VAMPIRELLA MAGAZINE*. When Greg said he was up for some more SOD work, our first decision was to expand the story you have here and make it part of the canon.

For those who haven't heard, Greg and I work with *NO SCRIPT*. Oh, I can script. Tokyopop manga scripts, for instance, run 160 pages each, with every panel numbered. But Greg and I work old-fashioned Marvel style, through a synopsis and lots of phone calls.

The process goes like this:

1. I write out the plot, often down to page-for-page
2. Greg draws the line art in black and white
3. I do "lettering guides," laying dialogue on the art. These are beyond ugly, but they're often the first time actual dialogue is written for the book (again, completely the opposite of every job I've ever done)
4. Ed replaces my lettering guides with final letters.
5. If the book is color, meanwhile, the colorist colors
6. Ed puts it all together



VAMPI AND RONNIE

I can imagine few characters that offer a better juxtaposition with Ronnie than Vampirella.

Greg wanted Vampirella to be a dream from a foreign movie, a smooth-talking, sexy vampire whose powers existed as much in her charisma as her superhuman speed.

I really liked the idea of Veronica Van Helsing and Vampirella having been friends in the past—we only refer obliquely to what went on between them, but there's a couple of references to a ruined rug. In my mind, Ronnie knew Vampirella when Ronnie was a ski rescuer in Wyoming, which is a period we've never actually illustrated in the comic. I hope we do someday. To my mind all good universes stretch forward and back and sideways, and there are always more stories to fill in the cracks.

In the first place, Ronnie Van Helsing is an unusual protagonist because she's neither a sexpot nor an overly mannish character. I think the closest protagonist I can think of in comics would be Carrie Stetko of *Whiteout*, which I reviewed for a column I was writing not long before we started working on *SWORD OF DRACULA*. I mean, Ronnie feels real to me, and I



know a lot of people with all kinds of problems. But the competent ones—the ones you'd actually trust to advise you or lead you—aren't crippled by them. From the beginning I wanted Ronnie to be a picture of competence, with some issues. The issues she's been seen to deal with are very real—in previous issues we saw that she struggles with bulimia, a disorder that compels a person to purge themselves of food, usually in order to be thin. Ronnie is actually the spitting image of a ski editor I knew who hid exactly the same secret, and the truth is Ronnie seems no less likely to struggle with the issue than my friend did. She didn't walk around with a sign that said "so needy I'm killing myself to be this thin,"





but one day she got up and her weakened heart gave out and she died. Don't kid yourself, people hide their major demons.

Ronnie was headed that way in the first SOD series, but by now she has kicked the problem. Maybe someday we see that process. But one thing we know is if Ronnie was killing herself to stay thin, her sister Judith put the notion in her head. We've seen in the various issues that whatever problems Judith had, she taunted Ronnie about her weight.

But Judith has been dead for years, as far as Ronnie knows.

In fact, it would be good to spend a moment explaining Ronnie's family a tiny bit.

RONNIE'S FAMILY

As mentioned in various places so far in SOD, Ronnie is smack in the middle of a family of seven—two parents, five siblings.

So here, probably for the first time, is the full list. Picture it's fifteen years ago, put a stake in that chronological ground, and you get them all alive.

From oldest to youngest:

JUDITH VAN HELSING: Judith is the over-achiever of the family, a smart, athletic vampire hunter who's almost a walking cliché, except that she's stuck with three sisters and a brother who don't measure up to her demands. She constantly gives Ronnie guilt trips about not being the daughter that Mom and Dad demand. She lectures. And lectures. And lectures. And the BEST part is she tells Ronnie she's saying these things "for your own good." What happened to her: Blown up in a car by Alex.

ALEX VAN HELSING: Alex benefits from life with three sisters by learning how to talk to girls, so he's constantly making time with women. However, he really wishes for some privacy. What he understands in impressing girls he lacks somewhat in respect. Today, in a monastery because of what happened to Frankie and what he did to Judith.



From left :

- Ronnie
- Judith
- Alex
- Bobbie
- Frankie.

VERONICA "RONNIE" VAN HELSING: Ronnie is the middle sister in a family of one older sister, an older brother, and a younger sister. She is the most ignored of the family and the most given to flights of fancy. She can be silly and will fight for respect.

FRANCESCA "FRANKIE" VAN HELSING: A little weird, with her own brand of voodoo magic, kind of gothy, kind of chubby. Every day she seems intent on following the lead of Ronnie or Judith—either becoming a layabout or an over-achiever. Today: dead. We'll get there eventually.

ROBERTA "BOBBIE" VAN HELSING: The baby of the family, she completely worships the ground Ronnie walks on. Bobbie is the brainiest of the sisters. Today: US Attorney in Boston, Massachusetts.

So why do I list these out now?

Because in this story we see a few of these chickens come home to roost. When we open the story, Ronnie is kidnapping a witness lately in the employ of a character called THE CURATOR, a mysterious new player in the vampire circles. Ronnie suspects this figure is personally connected to her.

Okay, so it should come as no surprise that The Curator is Judith. For Pete's sake, you don't have a sister blow up in a car, even in back story, without bringing her back.

Still—Ronnie doesn't know yet. But now we know.

What does this mean? It means that this issue is not filler; it's canon. And when we return in the summer with a special two-parter, we're going to see more of Judith, Ronnie and Dracula.

Want a preview? At least I can tell you what it's about. The next story is called THE DRACULA WAR, and it's big. (Riddle me this, Veronica: How do you get three thousand zombies into an airport? Answer: Find an airport with three thousand people in it.)

- Jay





GREG SCOTT'S ART PROCESS

The things that interest me (Greg Scott) about drawing comics are probably things that NOBODY else cares about—often I'll finish a job and somebody will comment on some heroic aspect of the artwork, and I'm thinking: Yeah, I appreciate that, that's okay, but what about that CAR in the background? That's a real Jeep Grand Cherokee! Or what about those drapes? Or the double lighting? Or the molding on that building?



These are things artists sweat over, but probably things only other artists notice. I used to work for Neal Adams at his New York Continuity Studios, where he stressed the importance of reference above all else—even drawing. You really can't have enough: If you have to draw a bus, dammit, you better know what a bus looks like!





So if you look at pages 11-14, you'll see various shots of New York's Grand Central Station inside and out. I lived in NYC when we started working on this, so me and my handy camera were off to the station. Jason's story called for a shot of Vampi looking down at Ronnie and her crew, so I went to the mezzanine, and I look up and there's this hot girl leaning over the railing looking down below—annnnnd click, she's in the story!



I do this kind of stuff for every job; it's important to me and the people I work with. It keeps me up at night, I kid you not. Damn you, Neal Adams!

Maybe next time I'll tell you about my near arrest for trespassing while getting the downshot on page 14.

-Greg

