

THE FEMPIROR CHRONICLES

THE MUTATION ENCOUNTER

A Short

by

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EXT. TRANSYLVANIA - VOIVODE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

SUPER: June 1889

The ancient home of the Draculya family sits alone atop a hill surrounded by a forest. The voice of a woman drifts across the Carpathian Mountains.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Monster! Give me back my child!

INT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - HARKER'S ROOM - NIGHT

JONATHAN HARKER looks up from a journal. He closes the book and puts it and his pen in his pocket. Strides to the barred window and looks down across the expanse to the main door to the castle.

A WOMAN with disheveled hair stands at the main door, beating on it. She backs up and looks up at the castle walls and windows. She locks eyes with Jonathan.

WOMAN

Give me back my child!

EXT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Growls sound from the forest behind the woman. She turns to them, fear crossing her face. The wolves emerge from the forest, walking slowly to her.

They charge. She screams.

INT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - HARKER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jonathan turns from the sight and crouches on the floor. He cups his hands over his ears.

EXT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

The wolves lay into the woman, when suddenly-

DAVID TAYLOR, who appears to be 28, leaps to her aid, slicing the nearest wolf with an ornate katana-style sword, throwing it dead to the ground. He is dressed in dark clothing with a dark cloak.

He grabs another wolf by the scruff of the neck, sending it soaring into the depths of the forest with a yelp. With a final slice, he cuts the head off of a third wolf before the others turn tail and run into the darkness of the forest.

He kneels to the woman.

DAVID

Are you all right?

The woman remains on the ground, tears flowing from her eyes.

WOMAN

My baby. Where is my baby?

DAVID

This is the castle of Voivode Draculya. He would not take your child.

The woman slaps him.

WOMAN

He is an unholy demon spawned by Satan himself. I know my baby is here.

David looks to the castle. A creature carrying a bag moves effortlessly along the side of the sheer castle wall. It leaps down and moves into a lower level of the castle.

DAVID

There are creatures in these mountains. They live in the abandoned lower levels of the castle, and may have your child.

WOMAN

Please...help me.

DAVID

Of course. What's your name?

WOMAN

Nadezhda.

DAVID

I'm David. Just stay with me,
and-

A child's scream echoes across the courtyard. The woman charges towards the castle.

NADEZHDA

Sandu!

David takes off behind her. They reach the entrance to the lower level. The door is smashed. They enter.

INT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

David takes a rod from his belt with a sliding lever. He pulls the lever down which slides a cover from the top of the rod. A spark flies and the end of a torch lights up.

Nadezhda turns to it in wonder.

NADEZHDA

How did you-

DAVID

Don't worry about it.

They walk a few more steps when a small voice pierces the silence.

SANDU (O.S.)

Mama!

The child, SANDU, screams again. Nadezhda sprints through the level, oblivious to danger. David draws his sword and runs right behind her, leaving a smoke trail from the torch behind him.

They reach the source of the screaming. Sandu, a boy of 4, sits on the floor surrounded by MUTATIONS. They turn to David's light and hiss, animalistically, their long canines glistening in David's limited light.

Without hesitation, they lunge for him. David hands the torch to Nadezhda.

DAVID

Take this. Get behind me!

David swings his sword and cuts the first Mutation down. Others dodge his sword blows as he inches closer to the screaming child. He runs one through and swings it over his head into group of them.

He grabs Sandu and runs for the exit.

DAVID

Stay close!

Nadezhda stays on David's heels as he runs for the exit. She glances behind her. Mutations run on all fours on the floor, and glancing slightly up, on the ceiling as well. She gasps.

DAVID

Eyes forward!

EXT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

David and Nadezhda emerge from the lower level and charge across the courtyard to the edge of the forest.

NADEZHDA

We can't go in there. The wolves!

They look back to the castle. Mutations pour out of the lower level. Some of them travel a short distance up the wall before leaping off to the ground.

DAVID

I'd rather face the wolves.
Let's go!

They disappear into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

David leads Nadezhda through the thick trees until they find themselves standing by a rock face. David puts down Sandu and look past the rock and down the hill a distance.

DAVID

Where do you live?

NADEZHDA

In a village at the bottom of the mountain.

DAVID

You walked up here alone?

NADEZHDA

I didn't have any choice. I had to save Sandu.

DAVID

I'm glad we were able to.

NADEZHDA

And I thank you, but who was that in the castle. He just looked at me when I begged for help.

David looks at her for a moment before realization dawns on him.

DAVID

Oh, that's Mr. Harker from London. He's a guest of Draculya. He really doesn't know what's going on around here, and frankly, I believe has made some very wrong assumptions about it. Voivode and I have been trying to keep him safe, but he thinks we're trying to make him a prisoner.

NADEZHDA

He did look as scared as I did.

INT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - HARKER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jonathan has his journal back out. He is writing in it.

JONATHAN (V.O.)

There was no cry from the woman,
and the howling of the wolves was
but short. Before long they
streamed away singly, licking
their lips. I could not pity her,
for I knew now what had become of
her child, and she was better dead.
What shall I do? What can I do?
How can I escape from this dreadful
thing of night, gloom, and fear?

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

David looks around the rock face and back to Nadezhda.

DAVID

Let's go.

Nadezhda takes Sandu's hand and they start to step out, but a Mutation leaps directly in front of them.

David draws his sword and makes several swipes at the Mutation. It avoids his every move.

More Mutations appear behind them. Nadezhda whips around to find them approaching.

NADEZHDA

David! We're in trouble!

David glances to them. He fakes a move and then catches the Mutation off guard. He cuts it down.

Another Mutation leaps from the rock onto David's back. It opens its mouth to bite down. David grabs it by the head and tosses it into the oncoming throng.

DAVID

Get on my back!

Sandu in one arm, Nadezhda holds on to David's neck. He backs away from the mob of Mutations quickly entering his momentarily safe area.

David charges down the slope, sword in hand, toward a small river running down the mountains.

NADEZHDA

What are you doing?

DAVID

We have to reach the water!

NADEZHDA

But it's freezing!

DAVID

Trust me!

More Mutations emerge from all sides and chase David at speeds the woman could never have managed. He maintains a death grip on David's garment, her arm around his neck, her other arm tightly grasping Sandu.

David reaches the river and leaps three-quarters of the way across before splashing down in the water. He swims to the far side and crawls onto the bank.

DAVID

We're safe.

NADEZHDA

But can't they follow?

DAVID

Look.

They turns to the onslaught of Mutations. At the sight of the water, many Mutations stop short. One Mutation fails to stop in time and fall into the running river.

It screams in agony as it bobs up and down in the rushing water. Skin melts off its skeleton and after a moment, what's left of it rushes down stream.

Nadezhda looks at David.

NADEZHDA

Thank you.

She kisses his cheek and pauses.

NADEZHDA

You're freezing.

DAVID

I'm fine. You need to get home.

NADEZHDA

Can you come with me?

DAVID

It'll be light soon. The creatures who chased us can run in the daylight, but prefer the cover and fear of the darkness. I, on the other hand, have to get back to the castle before the sun comes up.

NADEZHDA

What if they come back?

DAVID

Don't worry. They won't cross this, and the bridge isn't for some distance.

NADEZHDA

Very well. Thank you, David.

DAVID

Take care, Nadezhda.

Nadezhda and Sandu walk hand in hand down the mountain to a small village in the distance. David looks back to the castle atop the mountain. The day threatens.

David raises a hood on his cloak and walks along the river bed. He glances to the other side. Occasionally, a Mutation walks beyond the trees even with him, but then disappears.

EXT. VOIVODE'S CASTLE - DAY

David, still beneath his cloak, walks through the gate to the castle and to the main door. He takes out a key and turns it in the lock. He enters the castle and closes the door behind him.

THE END