



**VLAD**

THE WORLD'S  
**WORST**  
**VAMPIRE**

To Albert, who looked fang-tastic in his Vlad costume  
for World Book Day

– A.W.

For my talented cousin Elizabeth who never ceases  
to impress me!

– K.D.

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*Midnight Fright*

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**Stripes**



1

Vlad shivered. He was standing in the graveyard outside Misery Manor with his parents and grandfather by his side. It was a chilly, cloudy night and the sky was as black as a bat's wing. There was not a star in sight – even the moon seemed to have gone into hiding.

Vlad pulled his cape around him. He hated the graveyard and he hated the dark. He was also nervous. He was waiting for the arrival of his cousin, Lupus Fang, who was coming from Transylvania that very night. Vlad's



parents, Drax and Mortemia, had invited Lupus to stay to show Vlad “how to be a real vampire”.

*Mother and Father have already decided that he’s a much better vampire than me, Vlad thought as he scanned the inky sky for signs of his cousin’s arrival. I don’t want to have my lessons with him. He’ll make me seem even more of a failure.* He shivered again.

“Whatever is the matter with you?” snapped his mother. “Vampires do not feel the cold!”

“It’s not that,” said Vlad through chattering fangs. “I d-don’t like the dark.”

“Well, it’s about time you did,” Mortemia retorted. “You don’t want your cousin Lupus to see you quivering, do you?”

“I don’t care if he does,” Vlad muttered. “I never wanted him to come anyway.”

His father snorted. “If you were better at



your vampire skills then we wouldn’t have had to invite him. Although I must admit your mind control is coming along nicely.” He chuckled at the memory of Vlad shrinking his mother to the size of a spider.

The thought of spiders made Vlad shiver all the more. I bet there are hundreds of them out *here*. He felt as though his skin was crawling with them!

Grandpa Gory joined in with Drax’s chuckling, as if reading his thoughts.


“Mwhaha!” he chortled wheezily. “That was wicked!”

Mortemia glared at the old vampire. Gory immediately turned his laugh into a cough and slunk into the shadows.

“I’d rather you put your skills to better use,” said Mortemia bitterly. “You’d better not try shrinking your cousin, either.”







Flit the bat flew down from the yew tree in the corner of the graveyard. He landed on Vlad's shoulder. "Don't let them upset you," the little bat whispered. "I'll stick with you."

"Thanks," Vlad said. He didn't know what he would do without Flit. He'd already told the bat all his fears about his cousin coming to stay.

"He can't be good at *everything*," Flit squeaked, flying up and hovering by Vlad's side.

But Lupus's brilliant vampire skills were the least of Vlad's worries. Worse than that, Vlad was anxious that his cousin would find out his biggest secret – that he went to human school!

"Here he is!" shouted Drax, startling Vlad out of his thoughts. He pointed towards a dark shape coming through the night sky towards them.

Vlad followed his father's long bony finger. The black thing was moving at top speed. Vlad felt sure it was aiming straight for him! He squealed and dipped behind a tombstone for cover, then peeped round it. The shape was getting closer and closer and seemed to be accompanied by a swirling cloud of other smaller shapes.

"What are all those things flying with him?"

he asked in alarm.

Mortemia tutted. “They’re carrier bats, of course. How else do you think Lupus would be able to bring his luggage?”

“Carrier bats!” cried Grandpa Gory.

“Good to see they’re still using them in the Old Country.”

“Yes,” said Drax. “They may be more modern than us in *some* things, but Transylvanian vampires still use the old-fashioned methods of travel.”

Vlad crept out from behind the tombstone and stared up at the shapes as they came closer. His mother was right – a tight swarm of bats was circling now, each clutching a bag in their claws. In the midst of them was a larger bat.

Vlad couldn’t see very clearly because his night vision was still not as good as it should’ve been. He squinted at the big bat.



*It must be Lupus, Vlad thought. Father said he was big and strong. I wish he would turn around and go back home.*

Vlad screwed his eyes tight shut. He made himself think about how angry he was. Then he focused on sending Lupus away, using mind control.

He imagined Lupus being surrounded by the carrier bats...



...the bats would swoop him up and turn him around...

...Lupus would be powerless to resist...

...he would be carried back to

Transylvania...

Suddenly, Vlad felt the air around him grow even colder. His mind went cloudy.

It was as though someone were pushing his thoughts out of his brain, freezing him so that he couldn't move, couldn't think...

Vlad tried to concentrate but it was no use. The cloudiness became heavier and darker, and he himself became colder and colder. He found that he couldn't remember where he was or what he was thinking.

Then...

THWACK!

Something slapped into Vlad, pushing him back into the tombstone. He bumped his head.



"OW!" He struggled to sit up and blinked into the darkness. "What was that?" he cried.

"You should keep your eyes open, mate," said a voice. "Specially when you're in the flight path of an incoming vampire.

Mwhahahahaha!"

Vlad shrieked and ducked back behind the tombstone, while Mortemia burst out laughing.

"Bravo!" Drax applauded. "What a landing. Super-fast nosedive!"

"Like a hawk plummeting towards its prey," added Grandpa Gory approvingly.

Vlad peeked back around the stone to get a good look at his cousin. Lupus was the same age as Vlad, but even in the dark it was clear how much taller and stronger he was.

Vlad groaned inwardly. "Thanks, Uncle D," Lupus said to Drax. "It's great to finally get here."





*Uncle D? Vlad thought. Father won't like that nickname.*

But Drax gave Lupus a hearty slap on the shoulder and said, "We've been looking forward to your visit, young devil."

"Did you have a good flight?" Mortemia asked, brushing down Lupus's cape. "You're brave to come all this way on your own."

Drax nodded. "It's a long way from Transylvania."

"In my day, young vampires had to have an adult flying with them," said Grandpa.

"Yeah well, this is the twenty-first century, not the seventeenth," said Lupus with a grin.

Drax chuckled. "That's true!" he said.

Vlad gasped. He was speechless at how his cousin had got away with being so cheeky.

Flit gave a disapproving squeak, but Mortemia and Drax didn't notice. They





seemed enchanted by Lupus.

“There was a bit of turbulence on the way over,” Lupus told them, “but I just went with the flow. You know what it’s like – if you relax you can fly through anything.”

Drax looked at Mortemia approvingly.

“Just what I always say, isn’t it, my evil one?”

“Indeed,” said his mother crisply. “In fact, perhaps you can take Vlad on a night flight a bit later, Lupus? You’re here to work, after all.”

“Sure. I can show Vlad some tricks,”

Lupus replied carelessly.

Vlad scowled.

Lupus noticed Vlad’s expression and his grin faltered. “Maybe some other time. I’m pretty hungry now,” he said.

Drax clapped his hands and roared, “Of course! An energetic young vampire like you needs his iron. Let’s get you inside.”

“Yes,” Mortemia said. “Why don’t you dismiss your bats, Lupus? They’re welcome to stay in the belfry. Flit will show them the way.”

The bats began to cluster around Flit.

“Sorry, Vlad!” Flit squeaked. “I’ll come and see you later.”

Then he flew off to the belfry at the far end of Misery Manor with the carrier bats following.

Vlad watched sorrowfully as his bat friend disappeared into the darkness.

“Mulch will bring the bags,” Mortemia was saying. “And Vlad, you can show Lupus your room – you’ll be sharing,” she explained to Lupus.

“What?” Vlad exclaimed. “Why can’t he stay in the West Wing? There are loads of spare coffins there.”

“Vladimir!” Drax exploded. “Lupus is one



of the family and will be treated as such.

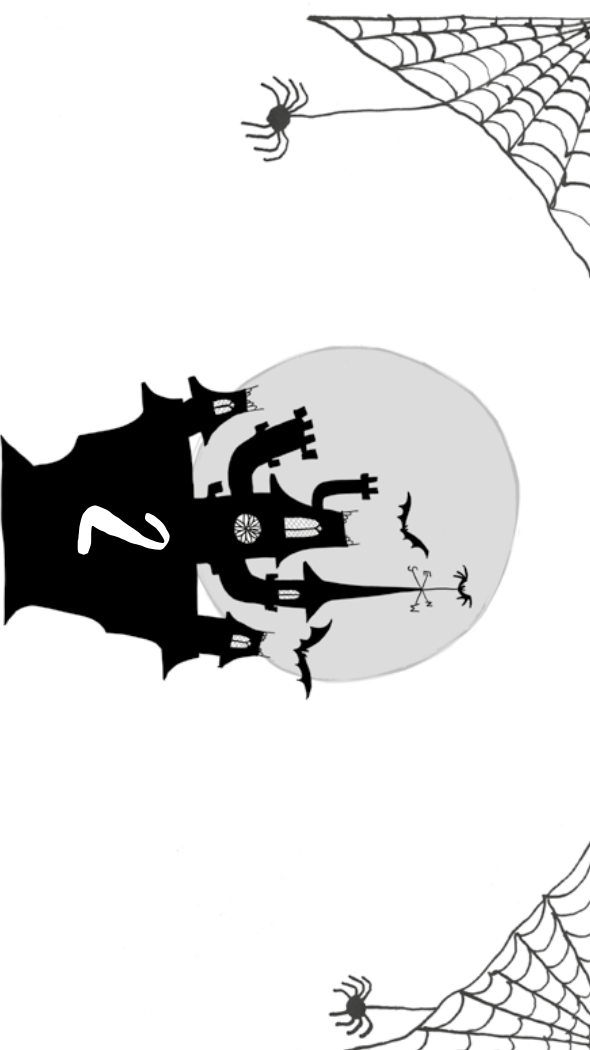
Show him to your room immediately. I've already asked Mulch to move a coffin in for him. Why don't you join us in the dining room for lunch once Lupus has unpacked?"

"Hmm, lunch!" said Grandpa Gory, smacking his lips. "I thought you'd never ask." He began hobbling towards the house with Mortemia and Drax on either side of him.

Vlad eyed Lupus's bags. He'd brought so much luggage! It looks as though he's planning to *stay for ever*, he thought.

"Come on then, Lupus," Vlad said gloomily.

He turned and made his way in to Misery Manor with Lupus close behind.



"This is my room," Vlad muttered, pushing open the door.

Lupus said nothing as he walked around, taking a good hard look at everything.

Vlad meanwhile was taking a good hard look at Lupus! In many ways he looked like a traditional vampire: he had jet-black hair, huge fangs and he wore an expensive-looking black velvet cape lined with red silk.

However, under the cape, Vlad could see clothes that looked distinctly un-vampiric. Curiously, they looked a lot like the clothes

