Blade 3/ Marvel

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BLADE III: NIGHTSTALKERS

(story concept)

The basis for Blade III is simple – we want to return the franchise to its roots. We want Blade III to be firmly set in the real world, even more so than the first film.

In the second film, Blade found himself caught between the vampires and the reapers. In the third film, Blade will find himself caught between the vampires and humans – for the vampires are going to "out" Blade. They are going to reveal his existence to the world and turn the system against him. Now, Blade will be running from the police as well as the vampires. His whole world will be taken out from under him – Whistler, his arsenal, his safe-houses. All of that will be stripped away. The film will be Blade as *The Fugitive*. In a sense, the vampires are waging a PR war against Blade.

As the film begins, we are watching a Larry King-type show. KIERAN RYAN, a good-looking pundit, is debating with Larry about the existence of vampires. Ryan says it's all an overblown myth – what the public should <u>really</u> be worried about are people like Blade. Blade is a psychopath – a killer with a deeply twisted world-view who has been caught murdering people on videotape numerous times.

Blade will be caught on videotape yet again – purportedly killing a vampire. But when the authorities investigate, the victim turns out to be human. Blade has been tricked. Framed.

Suddenly, Blade's image is everywhere – in the newspapers, on the nightly news. He's being portrayed as public enemy number one, and the police are after him.

Act One ends with the police converging on Blade's headquarters. A vicious fire-fight ensues and Whistler is killed. Whistler dies like a classic gunfighter, in a blaze of glory – think Holden in *The Wild Bunch*. The headquarters itself is destroyed, goes up in flames. And Blade is captured – restrained like a mad dog. Taken to jail.

Act Two begins with Blade imprisoned. He's been doped up, stripped of his weapons. The police are grilling him. They think he's delusional. (Think of the best elements of T2.) But it gets worse – the CHIEF OF POLICE is actually a vampire familiar. And just when things look darkest –

-- HANNIBAL KING arrives, breaking Blade out of captivity. Who is Hannibal? Another Marvel Universe character that frequently aligned himself with Blade. King is a hunter/mercenary that used to be a vampire but has since cured himself. He hates vampires as much as Blade does – and he's been aware of Blade from the get-go. King is

Blade's counterpart – now a Robin to Blade's Batman – but a fully-formed hero in his own right.

King knows that the vampires have declared war on Blade, and he wants to help Blade. It seems the vampires are making their final move. It's time for them to come out of the shadows. Because of the urgency of the situation, King doesn't have time to indulge in a turf war with Blade. They need to pool their resources.

King has a whole arsenal of new weapons at his disposal. He's the flip-side of Blade. An extrovert – talkative, white, with an entirely different approach to vampire hunting. He's got his own series of safe-houses and procedures as well. King works with a loosely affiliated group of vampire-hunters called THE NIGHTSTALKERS. Among the Nightstalkers is another character from the TOMB OF DRACULA comics – FRANK DRAKE. Drake is a direct descendent of Vlad Tepes Dracula, i.e. COUNT DRACULA.

It turns out that Dracula really existed. He was the first vampire. He's thousands of years old. And – (if you go back to the source material, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*) – he's also a Daywalker. Dracula has returned. In effect, he's the vampire messiah. His reemergence in the world is what has catalyzed the vampires. Because he's a Daywalker, they no longer need Blade. They simply want Blade gone. He's been a thorn in their side for too long, and they want him removed as they begin taking over.

But Dracula won't be played like Bela Lugosi or Frank Langella. He's the Blade universe version of the Count. A literal shape-shifter (again, going back to Stoker's book) who can assume anyone's face – even Blade's. (That's how the vampires were able to set Blade up – Dracula was posing as Blade, killing an innocent human on tape.)

At first, Blade himself doesn't even believe that Dracula exists – and we're going to play on that disbelief. ("Dracula? You gotta be fucking kidding me.") We're going to have fun with it. King and Drake will reference all the books and movies and Dracula toys. Dracula can essentially hide in plain sight now because everyone thinks he's simply a brand-name.

But eventually, Blade will come to believe that Dracula does exist. And he will prove to be the most formidable enemy that Blade has ever faced. Dracula is smarter, faster, stronger – and he can assume the face of every human being walking around on this planet.

Think about it. Blade fought a reaper in Blade II. Who else could Blade fight in the third film that would really give him a run for his money. By saying he will be fighting Dracula, the audience already knows that Blade will be going up against the toughest vampire that ever existed. No one is more formidable than Dracula.

The vampires are making pacts with the politicians. They are opening up large-scale blood farming facilities – vast, ware-house tombs where thousands of human victims are kept on life-support, milked of their life-blood. Where do the victims come from? The

homeless. The drug-addicts. The fringe-elements. The vampires are buying up skid row, getting rid of the riff-raff, and feeding on them. This is just one example of the kind of horrors that the vampires have planned.

Another trick I'd like the vampires to employ is to have them port the vampire virus over into other life-forms. I envision a fun scene where Blade has to go up against a pack of vampire-Rotweillers that have been sent after him.

Ultimately, Blade will face-off against Dracula. And as our film hurtles towards its conclusion, Blade's new allies, the Nightstalkers, will reveal their own plan. They want to use Blade's DNA to create a biological weapon to use against the vampires – a smallpox-like disease that will kill all vampires. The only catch is, if Blade releases this weapon, he may end up killing himself because of his half-breed status.

I want the final act of the film to be a gauntlet for Blade. Blade is racing against time to release this weapon and the vampires have no choice but to send their entire force after him. For the final act, the paradigm shifts. Now the vampires come out of the woodwork – they can't afford to use deception or stealth. A series of chases and fights spill over into the real world, with hundreds of human witnesses seeing the vampires – and the vampires using those witnesses as human-shields. We want Blade chasing vampires into traffic, jumping over and in-between cars, shooting vampire-monstrosities right and left.

For the climax, Blade turns the tables on the vampires and irrefutably outs them. Dracula is killed by Blade in front of dozens of witnesses. And when he goes down, he is not in human form.

I also believe that this installment of the franchise will provide more humor opportunities. One of the funniest moments in the first film was when Blade was shot at by the police and said "Motherfuckers! Are you out of your motherfucking mind?!" I want the entire movie to have that kind of feel.

Also, there is the potential, if we develop King and Drake right, to make them franchise spin-off characters.