

Pans labyrinth character notes, captain vidal



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Captain Vidal is shown in a nightmarish light; while Ofelia is busy receiving her gifts from the faun, Vidal has pulled in two natives to the valley, and, while his soldiers look on, brutally interrogates the two, beating the father to near death with the butt of a wine bottle before shooting the son and then shooting the father.

The grisly display, easily one of the most disturbing moments of the film, is made even more disturbing by the precision with which Vidal goes about his gruesome work, suggesting that he is a truly evil man, a real lord of nightmares who revels in the control he exercises over others and will willingly do whatever he pleases with them. Vidal is shown to be most at home in these rigid quarters, accentuated by straight lines, absolute order, and clockwork cogs, which can be seen every time the captain is in his workshop.

The captain's workshop, and all he does down here, becomes an integral part of his character; here, he feels that he has absolute control over everything. He is first pictured keeping his watch in meticulous condition, and is later shown to shave while in this room, using an extremely straight and sharp razor to do so. During one of Vidal's most disturbing scenes, he is shown to be forcing control of the spiralling situation of the valley itself, shortly before the rebels assault the outpost, by sewing the wound on his cheek by himself, digging through the pain in order to fulfil his lust for control.

However, he is obviously losing the battle; during this same scene, after assuming that he has fixed the problem and is once more in control of the

situation, he takes a swig of whisky, which immediately burns through his wound, showing that, despite his best attempts, he can no longer take control of the situation. The true irony of Vidal's spiral is seen in the climax of the movie, as both he and Ofelia face their own deaths.

Ofelia is murdered by Vidal when he shoots her, but her death was almost a choice. Ofelia, since her arrival in the outpost, has been trying to fight off the nightmare that is her reality with a fantasy that was apidly becoming its own type of nightmare, but the young girl, exercising free will, finally fights the faun's instructions and flat refuses to shed her brother's blood, standing defiant in the face of the nightmare and wresting control of the situation.

Though she dies almost immediately after making the decision, she has defeated her nightmare and is, more importantly, aware of what she has done, and can thereby die no better death than to find herself now in control, having finally returned to her ream, bathed in gold light and filled with wide, open spaces as she moves on to become the princess of the underworld.

Vidal, however, enraged and drugged, believes that he has taken control of his own situation only to find that, upon coming out of the labyrinth a symbol of order consumed by undisciplined nature he has lost all the order that he has sought in his life. Defeated, he hands his son to Mercedes and requests that he be told how great a man his father was during his life, hoping