

**FUNERAL!**  
*an interactive mystery play*

BY

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### Characters

- CLAIRE EASTERLY: Female, 30-60. Ladylike and filthy rich – an appearance that contrasts strangely with her encyclopedic knowledge of vampire lore.
- CANDACE BEAUMONT: Female, 20-30's. Claude's wife. Isn't feeling very well tonight.
- CLAUDE L'ECUREUIL: Male, 25-40. Heavy British accent, despite the last name that nobody can pronounce. Vaguely metrosexual. Adores his Honey Bunny Candace.
- FATHER RABINOWITZ: Male, 30-50. Presiding over the ceremony.
- BETTY-JO CASPER: Female, 30-50. Funeral parlor owner. A successful businesswoman and excessively cheery.
- JARED CALLAGHAN: Male, 30-50. Uncouth, unapologetic, and very bored.
- ABIGAIL: Female, 20-35. Has a good heart but not much of a brain.
- OFFICER FREDERICK REINRASSIG: Male, 30-50. Had a hunch that something funny might at this funeral. Has a mind firmly grounded in reality, although perhaps a bit manic.
- THE BUSBOY: Male, 30-40. Reasonably good-looking and trim.  
*In the playbill this character should be listed as “Mike”, to avoid giving away the ending. Alternatively he can be omitted from the playbill and audiences can be given his name and biography at the end.*

*Please see “Characters for Audience Members” in Appendix. These are optional embellishments for a production desiring more audience interaction.*

### Setting

Betty-Jo's Funeral Parlor; in the town where the play is being performed.  
The funeral of Adolfo Heliodoro Mendoza.

### Time

The Present.

FUNERAL!

*Scene:* This play is intended for a dinner-theatre setting that facilitates actors roaming freely among the audience. A colorful sign hangs prominently on the wall near the entrance: “Betty-Jo's Funeral Parlor”, and a note tacked to the side: “Ask us about our two-body specials! Now thru November.” Cheery music plays softly. A coffin is displayed in a prominent, uncrowded location. Two chairs sit within ten feet of coffin. Six other chairs are reserved for actors.

*As Audience Enters:*

Actors are present before the script begins. CLAIRE, CLAUDE, CANDACE, ABIGAIL, and JARED wait out in the lobby for the House to open, and file in with the Audience. BETTY-JO is busy with last-minute preparations, whether she's making sure everyone is seated comfortably or scrambling around on her cell phone. Actors may interact with Audience or simply take their seats and wait. *Audience need not know who the actors are until the play begins.*

*Before Act 1:*

ABIGAIL, CLAUDE, and JARED all order garlic fries from waitress. CLAUDE also orders a drink.

During pre-script conversations, Actors may divulge the following. These are suggestions, and actors are encouraged to elaborate. It is important, though, that they **not divulge further information regarding Adolfo.**

CLAIRE: I lived in same building as Adolfo, overlooking Riverside Park. What a beautiful man he was – I'd have died for that complexion.

CANDACE: My husband Claude worked with Adolfo. Apparently I met him, but I don't remember. I'm not feeling too well this evening.

CLAUDE: I worked with Adolfo at the blood bank. He seemed like a nice enough fellow, although I didn't know him well.

JARED: Hi, I'm Jared. When does the food get here?

ABIGAIL: (Sobs and sniffles; doesn't reveal who she is.)

FATHER RABINOWITZ: Good evening, I'm Father Rabinowitz. I will be presiding over the ceremony.

BETTY-JO CASPER: Welcome!!!

OFFICER: (Doesn't interact with anyone.)

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

## ACT 1

*At Rise: CANDACE and CLAUDE sit next to each other near front. CANDACE has two faint small round marks on her neck; looks a little weak and ill. CLAIRE sits within 5-10 feet behind CANDACE. BETTY-JO sits in chair near coffin, facing Audience. FATHER stands by coffin. ABIGAIL sits up front somewhere, clad in black, prostrate with grief. JARED sits wherever he feels like sitting. OFFICER sits in back, inconspicuous.*

*ABIGAIL, CLAUDE, and JARED should receive their garlic fries within the first ten minutes of the show.*

*BUSBOY comes in and out, clearing away tables throughout ceremony.*

FATHER

All right, all right everyone, might we get this little business started? I'm afraid I have another engagement at midnight, all the way up in Astoria, and I won't be able to hang around and celebrate after the ceremony.

*(Various whispered reactions to "celebrate.")*

JARED *(To anyone)*

What's a priest got to do at midnight?

CLAIRE

Sshhh!

FATHER

*(Reading from a notecard)*

We are gathered here today to celebrate the union of two beautiful souls into one –

BETTY-JO *(Whispering loudly)*

Father Rabinowitz, this is a *funeral!*

FATHER

I beg your pardon?

BETTY-JO

This is the Mendoza funeral, Father Rabinowitz. Adolfo Mendoza.

FATHER

Oh! Oh yes, *that* sordid affair. Right-o. Just but a moment, please

*(Flips through entire stack of notecards)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

FATHER (cont'd)

Lloyd, Lucas, Mancini ... Michaels ... Mendoza ... Ah, Mendoza! Can't even spell, how d'you like that. All right then, here we are. Marvelous.

JARED

He, he .. Kick ass, man.

CLAIRE

Don't be obnoxious!

CLAUDE

Candace, Buttercup, are you feeling quite all right?

CANDACE

Just tired. I'll be fine.

FATHER

We are gathered here today to celebrate the passing of – ... er, to mourn the passing of Adolfo Heliodoro Mendoza. A grand and generous man who died of ...

*(trying to read notecard)*

... died of ...

*(squinting. A few guests shift uncomfortably in their seats.*

*CLAUDE clears his throat loudly.)*

Er ... died of an untimely death. *(Pause.)* God wants everyone to know that Adolfo is doing just fine. He is resting comfortably upon pillows of fluffy clouds and ... and will live forever after in peace, listening to the gentle strum of golden harps.

*(Some quizzical glances are exchanged. FATHER brightens with an idea.)*

Perhaps we should all recite the Lord's Prayer! Shall we?

*(Various nods of assent.)*

Very well, excellent. *(Pause.)* Who would like to lead us?

*(Silence.)*

BETTY-JO

I am sure Adolfo's family appreciates the offer, Father, but perhaps you had better lead us.

*(OR: If an audience member volunteers, fine. Then skip to FATHER's last two sentences below.)*

FATHER

Ah. Yes. Very well. Excellent. *(Pause.)* On the other hand, perhaps we might want to go ahead and skip the Lord's Prayer, as I can see you're all anxious to speak your personal words of parting. So why don't we get right down to it and start the eulogizing? Would any of the friends and relatives like to say a few words?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CANDACE

Oh ...

FATHER

Yes, Miss, come right on up.

CANDACE (*Appearing weak*)

Oooh, uhh ...

CLAUDE

Candace? You appear weak.

CANDACE

I'm just exhausted! I don't know what it is.

CLAUDE

It isn't like you, my poor little pumpkin. It's started ever since the dear old boy died.

CLAIRE

It's likely the stress caused by his passing.

CLAUDE

Indeed. Candace, why don't you go lie down in the other room?

CANDACE

Lie down. That's a good idea. I'll go into the other room. Please excuse me everyone, I'm dreadfully sorry. I'll be back in a few minutes. (*Exit.*)

CLAUDE

We apologize for the interruption, Rabbi. Er, Father.

FATHER

That's quite all right, it was a nice diversion. Takes your mind off the graveness of the matter at hand. So anyone care to do a little eulogizing?

(*Pause*)

BETTY-JO

(*Eager to save face, as this isn't starting off well*)

I'll say a word. (*Walks to coffin.*)

FATHER

Ah, Ms. Casper.

JARED

(*Aside to Anyone, regarding OFFICER*)

Hey. Check out the dark mysterious creep in the back of the room.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

BETTY-JO

Well, first I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you all for coming. Betty-Jo's Funeral Parlor currently offers an array of ceremonial packages to choose from, as I'm sure you noticed, and we're delighted to serve your funereal needs with the kind of down-home atmosphere you seldom get at funerals nowadays. Hence our buffalo wings and beer. Or daytime specials offer a make-your-own-brunch, and if you book on weekends we toss in a pint of Jack Daniel's for everybody.

*(Pause. Sudden change of manner from bright-'n-sunny to appropriately grave.)*

And now to the matter at hand. Adolfo Heliodoro Mendoza. What can one say about such a man?

*(Tries to think of something.)*

Well, I must admit sadly I was not privileged to have known the man; in a business like mine you seldom get to know your clients!

*(Waits for laughter.)*

Er ... Let me tell you, it was rather unusual to receive all funeral arrangements by handwritten snail-mail, just like in the olden days!

*(Waits for laughter; gives up.)*

So perhaps I will leave the appropriate tributes to those who knew him best. Thank you all for coming.

FATHER

Thank you, Ms. Casper. Anyone else?

*(Pause. Audience members can speak if they volunteer. But if anyone pretends to have been a relative of Adolfo, actors must force him/her to admit to lying.)*

JARED

I'll say a few words.

*(Walks to front.)*

Adolfo seemed like a nice enough guy. I met him at Foxwoods last March. We played a private game of poker. He had a quick wit. Sharp little bastard. I'm sure he was a good guy and all, had two-point-five children who needed feeding and all that shit, but he did after all come out of the evening owing me two thousand bucks, so if I can speak discreetly with one of the relatives later over the terms of his legacy, that'd be sweet.

CLAUDE

Do you mean to say you came here to claim money he owed you?

JARED

I admit it's kind of an asshole-esque thing for me to do, but hey, I'm hard-up.

ABIGAIL

Would you stop swearing? This is a funeral!

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

BETTY-JO

Yes, Sir, I'm afraid I will have to ask you to tone down your language.

CLAUDE

You came to a funeral for money?! What a shitty thing to do, man!

ABIGAIL

Stop swearing, would you!

CLAIRE

Foxwoods. Wasn't that where the woman from Wisconsin was murdered by her cat last summer?

JARED (*To CLAUDE*)

Hey, two thousand dollars is two thousand dollars. It's not like it's my fault the guy was murdered.

(*Various shocked reactions.*)

Oh, sorry ... "*died unfortunately*", is that better?

CLAIRE

That's right, it did happen at Foxwoods. Her cat locked her in the sauna by some freak accident; she broiled to death. Gruesome.

JARED

Whose cat?

BETTY-JO

I believe I read about that. Insane story, wasn't it?

CLAIRE

I found it intriguing.

FATHER

Would anyone else care to speak?

CLAUDE:

Aw blast, I'll say something. The man deserves *something* nice to be said about him, at least. (*Makes his way to coffin.*)

FATHER

Wonderful, Sir. Er – Mr. Lew-coral-yuh, is that right?

CLAUDE

L'Ecureuil.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

FATHER

Right.

CLAUDE

I worked with Adolfo at the blood bank. I can't say I knew him well, but he was a decent man. He had a great deadpan sense of humor. Meticulously cared after things, including himself. And what a work ethic. He was always there before I got there in the morning; always still at it when I left at 5. Some of us guys got kind of put off because he'd never do much socializing. Never would come out to lunch with us or anything like that. But hey, he wasn't the life of the party; doesn't mean he wasn't a decent guy. *(Pause.)* I guess that's about it.

FATHER

Thank you, Mr. L'Ecureuil. Would your wife care to speak as well?

CLAUDE

Candace? She's stepped outside for a minute, Father. At any rate, I feel that I speak for both of us. Although she didn't know Adolfo. She met him once, maybe twice, when she visited me at the office. Although she doesn't remember! *(Laughs.)* She doesn't have the best memory for people, my wife.

FATHER

Well, when she returns she will be welcome to come forward at any rate.

CLAUDE

Oh, that's great, I'm sure she'll be ... delighted.

CLAIRE

I'll say something.

*(Doesn't bother to leave her seat.)*

Adolfo Mendoza was my neighbor. I live in the 80's on Riverside Drive, you know. Decent rooms, quite decent. Although the doorman sometimes leaves at midnight, which I think is an entirely unprofessional practice. With what we pay to live there, you'd think they could afford the hired help! Adolfo Mendoza was a beautiful man, I must say. Pristine white skin, like the sun never shone on it; I admired it so. I always teased him about it; that he must have gone through a bottle of SPF-45 each week. And a healthy flush to the cheeks and lips – ruby lips, his were. I can't get that effect without re-applying it every four hours! Divine! Such a tragedy about his death. Really. A tragedy.

FATHER

Thank you, Ms. Easterly, for those kind words. And thank you, to everyone who has spoken; I'm sure Mr. Mendoza would have appreciated the gesture. But perhaps we can have someone speak who actually knew Adolfo personally, to say some fine words about what kind of a man he really was. A close relative? A dear friend?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

ABIGAIL (*Between sniffles*)

I – I'll come.

FATHER

Oh, fine, Ms. Thank you. I am sure this is tremendously difficult for you, but I'm sure Adolfo would have appreciated it. You are his wife, I take it?

ABIGAIL

His wife?!

FATHER

Oh, sorry. His sister?

ABIGAIL

*(Blows nose loudly.)*

I just want to say

*(Breaks down; recovers.)*

I just want to say that Adolfo was the most kindly man and most generous tipper I'd ever met in all my days. He came like clockwork; always so reliable, especially on the slow nights. And he never bothered the waitstaff for anything, not even a glass of water. He just paid his cover and sat there, soaking up the music. His whole soul was rapt, you could sense it. We started counting on him to lend the place a bit of atmosphere; it suffused the entire room. An aura of mystery and vibrant life! To temporarily brighten our shallow, directionless existences. That won't happen anymore!

FATHER

There, there, everything will be all right, Ms. – I'm sorry, what is your name?

ABIGAIL

Abigail.

FATHER

Abigail --- ? *(Prompting her for her last name.)*

ABIGAIL

Yes, that's right.

FATHER

Of course. And how did you know the deceased?

ABIGAIL

I was just telling you, wasn't I? He was a customer at our lounge. Le Miroir en Morceaux, in the village. He came every Tuesday and Sunday night like clockwork.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

FATHER

And you - ?

ABIGAIL

And me? I'm a singer. I specialize in soul and jazz.  
*(Hands him her business card, still sniffing.)*

FATHER

A singer.

CLAIRE

Le Miroir en Morceaux – isn't that where that man choked on a Maraschino cherry and was administered the Heimlich maneuver by a nine-year-old waiter?

ABIGAIL

He wasn't a waiter, he was a patron's son!

CLAUDE

Jeeze, why so defensive?

CLAIRE

Ah, it was also the place tied up with that child labor dispute.

ABIGAIL

Those allegations are absolutely not true –

FATHER

Thank you for your kind words of parting, Ms. Abigail. Please allow me to assist you back to your table.

*(He does; returns to front.)*

Now. I am sure that Adolfo would have been touched that so many casual acquaintances came out to his funeral – it shows how meaningfully he touched people he barely knew. And I do thank all of you who spoke, for your kind words. But this is, after all, his funeral, and I'm sure he would appreciate a relative or loved one saying a few personal words in his memory.

*(Pause. Everyone politely waits. Again, if an Audience member wants to speak and pretends to be a relative, actors must force him or her to admit to lying.)*

FATHER

Wouldn't any of his relatives like to step forward and speak?

*(Pause. Everyone politely waits.)*

Well, can I have those relatives present at least identify themselves?

*(Everyone looks around.)*

Relatives? Friends?

*(Silence.)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

FATHER (cont'd)

Wait a minute – are you all telling me that not a single one of you is a blood relative or close personal friend of Adolfo Heliodoro Mendoza?

*(Silence.)*

Well, this is unprecedented. *(To BETTY-JO)* Did you get the date right?

BETTY-JO

*(Hurrying up to join him)*

Of course we got the date right! What kind of an establishment do you think we're running here?

FATHER

I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to offend. But ... Who made the funeral arrangements?

*(CANDACE enters and sits during BETTY-JO's following line.*

*She looks a bit worse than before. Faint marks on her neck are slightly more distinct.)*

BETTY-JO

Oh, well, it was Mr. Mendoza's ... *(Pause)* Well, I assumed it was the wife. Or the sister. *(Pause)* Or the brother. But all arrangements were handwritten and unsigned. I received the money, in cash. *(To Audience)* That's all that we require! *(Back to FATHER)* I was told by the writer that he – or she – was terribly busy and indisposed, and that the two of us would meet today at the ceremony. They were very polite letters, well-written. Exceedingly excellent penmanship. Nothing seemed amiss.

CLAUDE *(To CANDACE)*

Feeling any better, My Lovely?

CANDACE

I can't say, to be sure.

FATHER

But surely the man had some blood relation. Were they properly contacted?

BETTY-JO

Well it's up to the family, to contact the family. We had nothing to do with the guest list.

ABIGAIL *(To anyone)*

Maybe the family was scared away by the possible publicity. You know? The death being such *an affair*, and all. All those silly scary stories.

CANDACE

*(Not paying attention to the discussion; to herself)*

It could be the Alesse.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE

What, Sugar?

CANDACE

I just switched brands last week, remember? It could be that.

BETTY-JO

Brands of what?

CANDACE

Birth control.

CLAIRE

Alesse is supposed to be one of the lighter doses.

ABIGAIL

Why do you take birth control?

CANDACE (*Dryly*)

Because I love sex and I hate children.

ABIGAIL

Oh Sweetie, you're heading yourself straight for hell, you know.

CANDACE (*Mocking*)

No way, are you shitting me?

ABIGAIL

No! That's not what sex is for, Candace! That's not why God made you.

CANDACE

It isn't? (*To CLAUDE*) Did you know about this?

CLAUDE

I hadn't the foggiest, I swear.

BETTY-JO

All right, everyone, this is a funeral, let's have some respect. We don't need to get into a debate about sex at a time like this.

JARED

Definitely not. Completely inappropriate. Let's get on with the ghost stories

CANDACE

What ghost stories?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

ABIGAIL

Don't you ever pay attention to anything, you nympho? You don't see what this is leading up to, all those rumors about poor Adolfo's suicide?

CANDACE

Oh, what do I care what the rumors were flying around about this perfect stranger? Claude dragged me here, I never even met the man!

CLAUDE

Honey Bear, you did! We've been through this. You met him once in the hallway at our offices, when you picked me up for lunch. Maybe twice.

CANDACE

Well Claude, I simply don't remember. I don't even know what the man looked like. He must have been ugly, family didn't even want his photo in his obituary.

FATHER

His obituary had no photograph?

CLAUDE

Didn't you hear about this? That's one of the inspirations for the stories. They say there weren't any photos of him, and that that's evidence –

ABIGAIL

Oh, I'm tired of this nasty talk. He's dead, have some respect! In fact, let's put an end to the rumors once and for all. If we open that casket, poor Adolfo will look dead, won't he? That flush to his cheeks, those ruby lips – will be gone. Right?

CLAUDE

You want to open up the casket? This is a funeral! Father, don't you think that would be rather inappropriate?

FATHER

Technically, an open casket is optional.

BETTY-JO

All right, everyone, if you wanted an open casket all you had to do was ask.

*(CLAUDE and FATHER approach coffin as BETTY-JO lifts lid.)*

CLAUDE

Jesus Christ, there's nobody in here!

ABIGAIL

What?! *(Runs to coffin, along with JARED and CLAIRE.)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

Ha ha! Holy shit! That's fuckin' awesome!

BETTY-JO

Why I never -- ! I've -- Oh! I've never been so embarrassed! I'll call Saint Luke's at once; there must have been some horrid mix-up.

*(Pulls out her cell phone.)*

OFFICER

*(Rises from chair.)*

Excuse me, everybody, but maybe I can be of assistance.

JARED

Oh this guy. The mysterious person in the back of the room. He speaks.

BETTY-JO *(On phone)*

Yes, give me the morgue, please.

FATHER *(To OFFICER)*

Yes, Son?

OFFICER *(Into radio)*

It's worse than we expected, Yeager, we've got a corpse-stealer up here. Bar the exits. *(To everyone)* I apologize for barging in on a delicate affair, but it seems I was needed after all. I'm Officer Frederick Reinrassig, with the NYPD. Given the somewhat odd events on the evening of the deceased's death, we had a feeling some funny business might go down at his funeral. I came to keep a close eye on things. Apparently it wasn't close enough.

ABIGAIL

You're a cop, crashing a funeral?! How callous! What will the family say?

OFFICER

From the sounds of things, I'm getting there is no family here.

BETTY-JO *(Into phone)*

Yes, this is Betty-Jo Casper of Betty-Jo's Funeral Parlor down on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue ...

*(Exits hurriedly.)*

OFFICER

Now I'm sure by now you've all read about the circumstances of death. How a guy could commit suicide by strangling himself is, frankly, beyond me.

ABIGAIL

But ... he left a note ...

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

Yes. He left a note. Said he “just couldn’t take it anymore.” Typical. But now his body’s been stolen and things are getting more suspicious by the second. Now, if you wouldn’t mind, I have a few questions for the lot of you.

FATHER

Certainly, Son, although I don’t know how much help I’ll be. I’ve never had a body disappear on me before. Rather discombobulating.

OFFICER

So you saw the body in the casket earlier?

FATHER

Saw the body? Oh, no, I never saw the body. The casket was closed when I arrived.

OFFICER

Hm. Did anyone here positively identify the corpse as Mister Mendoza?

*(Various no’s, “I didn’t even see the body”’s.)*

Not a one of you saw the body in the casket this evening?

*(Various no’s.)*

ABIGAIL

*(Her mind suddenly at work)*

No one saw the body? Not once this whole evening?

OFFICER *(To himself)*

Hm. In that case, the body could have been stolen at any point once it arrived on the premises. We had a patrol out front guarding the exit – guy says the casket arrived around 5:15; is that right, Ms. Casper?

CLAUDE

She’s in the hallway, bitching out the hospital.

ABIGAIL *(To JARED)*

Are you thinking what I’m thinking?

JARED

I wasn’t aware that you were thinking anything.

OFFICER

Huh. *(Pause.)* So no positive identification. Did anyone here happen to have a photograph of him?

JARED

Don’t you people keep a photograph on record?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

Tell you the truth, we couldn't scrounge one up. Damn nuisance.

*(Starts inspecting the coffin and room, taking notes.)*

ABIGAIL

Oh my god. Oh my god, what if it's true?

JARED

What if what's true?

ABIGAIL

Those rumors! What the paramedics said when they found him – what if it's all true?

CLAUDE

Oh, for Chrissakes. Ms., don't get all crazy on us. It's a mix-up with the hospital. They made some ghastly mistake, all right? Or one of us stole him.

ABIGAIL

But listen, all these things they've been saying! And we've been saying! He never went out during the day. He had that flush to his face. There aren't any photos of him. And now, *he isn't in his coffin!*

FATHER

Yes, Miss, let's not make wild suppositions that you'll regret later. You're upset, your friend has died, but I fear that God wouldn't approve of us all discussing these unholy ideas –

ABIGAIL

*It's true!* You're all too cowardly a bunch to say it, aren't you? Well fine, then, I'll say it! Adolfo Heliodoro Mendoza was killed by the bite of the vampire! And now *he's become a vampire himself!*

*(All lights out suddenly. Various reactions.)*

BETTY-JO

*(Calling from offstage)*

It's all right, everyone, we've been having some trouble with the circuit breakers; nothing to be alarmed about. The lights should be up –

JARED

Who you think took the body, Father?

ABIGAIL

No one took the body, the body got up and left! Vampires don't lie around in their coffins after sunset. He's roaming the city, feasting upon the blood of the living! Doesn't anybody *read* anymore?!

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

*(Lights back up. Enter BETTY-JO.)*

BETTY-JO

There. You see?

OFFICER

*(Referring to ABIGAIL)*

Someone want to take care of the young lady?

*(Goes back to inspecting.)*

CLAUDE

*(For some reason is motivated to patronize ABIGAIL, who is slow to catch on.)*

Well, all right, let's try to help the officer get to the bottom of this, shall we? Let's step into Adolfo's shoes for a moment. So. He didn't commit suicide, he wasn't murdered ... he's a vampire and staged his own death. For as-yet undetermined reasons. Are we all on the same page so far?

*(ABIGAIL nods.)*

Good. Now. If you were a vampire and could flit about wherever you pleased, where would you be – right now?

*(Pause.)*

JARED

Hey, you know there's a porn shop right next door.

CLAUDE

Aha! Bingo.

CLAIRE

Vampire porn. Kinky.

ABIGAIL

Oh! You two are monstrous! Monstrous!!

CLAIRE

Dear, out of curiosity, what makes you so sure of your little supernatural theory

ABIGAIL

Aren't you listening to the evidence? Now I'm remembering. All these little things that didn't mean anything at the time. He never ate or drank. He worked at a blood bank! He always came to the lounge after dark. Even in the summertime when it stayed light out late, he never came before darkness had fallen. And I never even thought twice about it! It's so obvious, now that I think about it.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

It was probably three in the morning when he ran up his two-thousand-dollar debt. I didn't see him during daylight, either.

ABIGAIL

Aha!

CLAUDE

I saw him during the day, every day.

ABIGAIL (*Deflated*)

Oh.

CANDACE

Right, down in your dungeon. It may as well be nighttime down there; you all would never know.

*(OFFICER and BETTY-JO quietly converse together.)*

ABIGAIL

What do you mean?

*(CANDACE is busy massaging her temples. To CLAUDE)*

ABIGAIL

What does she mean?

CLAUDE

Well, our offices are in the sub-ground level. There aren't any windows. Candace thinks it's bad for my health.

ABIGAIL

Aha! Ha! And you said before that he would never go out to lunch with you! The man never ate! Or drank! Or let the sunshine hit his face!

CLAIRE

He did have a beautifully clear complexion. I'd have died for that complexion.

JARED (*To CLAUDE*)

I'm telling you, man – the porn shop.

CLAUDE

Shall we head down there and find him?

CLAIRE

Oh, you men. You never think with your brains. Don't you know that a vampire can't gain entrance to any place, without being *invited in*?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE

Invited in?

JARED

Oh yeah, man, she's right. A vampire has to trick his victim into inviting him inside – he can't just waltz around wherever he likes.

CLAUDE

Very well, fine, that can't be terribly difficult to accomplish. He knocks on the glass, waves your (*JARED's*) two-thousand dollars at the bouncer, and says, "Hi, can I come in?" What's the obstacle? The chap took care of his appearance like he was an Abercrombie model – he was obviously loaded.

JARED

I bet he transformed himself into a formless white mist. Those places love the dry-ice effect. You know?

CLAUDE

*(To a waiter/waitress, referring to fries at his table)*

Can I get some more garlic on these?

JARED *(To waiter/waitress)*

Oh, same here, please.

ABIGAIL

A formless white mist? That's crazy. Vampires turn into bats, not mists.

JARED

Oh bats too, for sure. But he could also be a mist.

ABIGAIL

No, he's always himself or a bat.

CLAUDE

Well, he's always himself.

ABIGAIL

I *mean*, he can *look* like himself or he can look like a bat. That's it.

CANDACE

Not hardly. He could be a giant wolf.

ABIGAIL

Why would he turn into a lumbering wolf if he could turn into a bat instead and fly all over the place into people's windows?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

Jesus, Doll, how can he have sex with innocent virgins if he's a bat?

CLAUDE

Wolves don't lumber.

ABIGAIL (*To JARED*)

Woah! Are you telling me he turns into a wolf and then has sex with people?

JARED

You know, you're not nearly as well-read as you think you are.

ABIGAIL

Okay, a wolf I'll allow. *Maybe*. Then he could have been that rabid dog that bit the photographer. But a formless white mist, you've got to be kidding me.

JARED

Sorry Sweetheart, vampires can totally turn into formless white mists.

CLAUDE

How else would they get into locked rooms?

ABIGAIL

They fly down the chimney, for Pete's Sakes! Vampires are bats! Just bats!

CLAIRE

Actually, Abigail, vampires can be bats, mists, wolves, spiders, and a variety of other types of wild animals and invented monsters, depending on the particular cultural lore to which you ascribe. Popular legends arose in the 1700's in southeastern Europe, particularly in Greece, and *Dracula*, the book, made famous the now well-known attributes, including the lifelike complexion, blood-drinking, true death via a stake through the heart, aversion to garlic. But there have been countless variations over the centuries. In Brazilian lore, for example, vampires have furry feet. In Romania, it was once believed that an already-dead body could become a vampire if a cat jumped over it. And then, of course, we actually see real creatures displaying symptoms of what have traditionally become labeled as vampire behavior. Vampire bats, for example, suck blood from living beings. It has been hypothesized that rabies victims, who tend to be hypersensitive to garlic and bright sunlight, may have given rise to such superstitions in the first place.

*(Pause. Everyone's impressed.)*

JARED

You – uh, know a lot about this.

CLAIRE

I devour it. It's diabolically fascinating.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

You are into blood-n-guts stuff, aren't you? You should have seen her outside on the street corner earlier. There was a fatal traffic accident. Claire was analyzing the trajectory of the corpse that had bounced off the front of the taxi and into the street-lamp post.

CLAIRE

It was just surprising to me, that the post didn't manage to sever the legs clear off the torso. I suppose I must have overestimated the torque the body would have been able to exert while winding around the pole. I saw one just like it on Riverside Drive a few months ago; crazy man managed to survive, minus his left leg. Fascinating.

(Pause)

JARED

So what do vampires do it for? Sucking the blood of perfect strangers?

CLAIRE

For nourishment.

CLAUDE

But they're dead. Why do they need nourishment?

CLAIRE

Ah, but they aren't dead, you see. They are *undead*.

CLAUDE

Undead?

CANDACE

I have to lie down. (*Exit.*)

CLAIRE

Yes. Undead.

(Pause)

JARED

What the fuck does that mean?

ABIGAIL

Don't swear!

CLAUDE

Seriously. How can "undead" not mean "alive"?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAIRE

It's a subtle point –

OFFICER

All right, everyone, I hate to interrupt the colorful debate, but can I have your attention please? Ms. Casper, how's about you repeat the gist of what you told me to everyone else – so we're all on the same page, as they say?

BETTY-JO

Certainly, Officer.

OFFICER

Ms. Casper, did you see the dead man in the casket earlier this evening?

BETTY-JO

No, I didn't. And I was just on the phone with Saint Luke's, and they say that they don't know a thing about it. The body was shipped off to the morgue, the morgue shipped it out in the coffin, or so they say, and after that they "can't tell me anything further."

FATHER

Can't tell you anything further?

*(Around now, ABIGAIL begins unobtrusively hunting around the room, peering into cracks and under tablecloths – looking for bats. I.e. "Maybe Adolfo is hiding!" She can continue this search intermittently, for the remainder of Act I.)*

BETTY-JO

That institution is so badly mismanaged, let me tell you, it's infuriating. It's a wonder they don't misplace their patients!

*(OFFICER occupies himself again, writing notes.)*

CLAUDE *(To JARED)*

Vampires must have it rough these days, did you think about that? With all the Herpes and Hepatitis going around? You can't go about sucking the blood of strangers as freely as you could centuries ago.

JARED

But centuries ago they had the bubonic plague.

CLAUDE

Oh yes, you're quite right.

JARED

I was thinking about the trouble they'd have hiding during their nightly excursions, with GPS satellites all over the place.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE

Yes, I hadn't considered that. Of course, being a vampire in New York City can serve as a little camouflage. With all the other freaks roaming around. I mean, if you saw a bloke with fangs and a black cape on the subway, would you think he was a vampire?

JARED

Shit, I wouldn't even notice him.

OFFICER

All right, now the casket was delivered here this evening by – who?

BETTY-JO

The morgue workers, I assumed.

OFFICER

Did they say they were from the morgue?

BETTY-JO

I didn't talk to them. Or see them; the casket was here when I came down from my office around 5:30pm.

OFFICER

You don't know who brought it in, then?

BETTY-JO

Well, naturally I just assumed the hospital had arranged it.

OFFICER

What did you do with it?

BETTY-JO

With the hospital?

OFFICER

No, with the casket.

BETTY-JO

Oh! Nothing. I left it where they'd put it and prepared the place for the ceremony.

OFFICER

Were you here the entire time?

BETTY-JO

No. I came and went. I had a lot to do.

*Armstrong/ Funeral!*

OFFICER

And when did you meet up with Father Rabinowitz?

BETTY-JO

He arrived around 7.

OFFICER

Thank you, Ms. Casper. Father, when did you get here?

FATHER

I arrived here around 5:45, just to take a look at the place. Then I left around 6 to find dinner. I returned around 7pm and met Ms Casper here.

OFFICER

Rabinowitz. Interesting name for a Catholic priest.

FATHER

Yes, well, I try to stand out. The Priesthood's a competitive business, you know. A little spit of originality helps you stand out from the rest.

OFFICER

You talk kinda funny, for a priest.

FATHER

Oh, well, I only recently converted. I'm still learning the ropes, so to speak.

CLAIRE

Why did you convert?

FATHER

I like the holidays better. They're more colorful.

CLAUDE

Don't you need to be a Catholic for, like a decade, before you can become a priest?

JARED

I don't know a decade would even do it. Those Catholics are fuckin' hardcore.

FATHER

Anyone can be a priest. You just have to take a class.

OFFICER

Now, you, Mr. Laycree-way-luh, you say –

CLAUDE

L'Ecureuil.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

Right. Thanks. You say you work at a blood bank, in the basement. An admirable, selfless profession.

CLAUDE

Yes. Thank you.

ABIGAIL (*To FATHER*)

Could I be a priest?

FATHER

Well, no.

OFFICER (*To CLAUDE*)

Interesting. You don't seem like the selfless type.

CLAUDE

Appearances can be deceiving.

OFFICER

You don't seem French, either.

CLAUDE

You don't seem German, Officer Rain Rassick.

ABIGAIL (*To FATHER*)

Why not?

JARED (*To ABIGAIL*)

Why are you all hell-bent on being a priest all of a sudden?

ABIGAIL (*To JARED*)

Would you stop swearing!

OFFICER

*(To CLAUDE; Loudly, to quell the competing conversation)*

Mr. Jared Callaghan, mind if I ask you a question or two?

JARED

Yeah?

OFFICER

You mind?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

No.

OFFICER

So Adolfo owed you money, did he?

JARED

Two thousand dollars. Bastard.

OFFICER

I imagine that stealing the corpse surrounded by such mystery could be worth something ... to the right people.

JARED

Maybe if it had two thousand dollars shoved into its coat pocket.

OFFICER

Is that a confession?

JARED

No.

OFFICER

Why did you suggest it?

JARED

Because frankly, Detective, I'm bored out of my fucking mind.

ABIGAIL

You're monstrous, will you stop talking like that? (*Under her breath*) Jesus!

OFFICER

(*To CLAUDE and JARED*)

You know, you two aren't the first wise-ass I've come across in this line of work. Don't you think I'm stupid.

JARED

I wouldn't dream of it.

OFFICER

Good. Now, when did you arrive this evening?

JARED

A little after 7:30.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

And what would you say –

ABIGAIL

*(Delighted at the opportunity to give him a hard time)*

Oh! Jared, didn't I see you leaving here around 6:30?

JARED

What?

ABIGAIL

I was having a bite to eat across the street; I could swear I saw you leave the building around 6:30. *(Pause)*

JARED

Oh, I forgot. Yeah. I came early to find some, uh, relatives to talk with. But no one was here. So I left, and came back around 7:30 for the ceremony. I totally forgot.

OFFICER

Totally forgot, eh?

JARED

Yep. Totally.

OFFICER

And you, Ms. ... Abigail – uh, do you have a last name?

ABIGAIL

Of course I have a last name, what kind of question is that?

OFFICER

Right. Sorry. Er, you were also in the neighborhood early?

ABIGAIL

Yes. I ate at Europan across the street. I had a milkshake and a scone. Blueberry.

JARED

The milkshake was blueberry or the scone was blueberry?

ABIGAIL

Yes, that's right.

OFFICER

Ms. Abigail, I apologize for bringing up a delicate private matter in a group setting, but is it possible that you had deeper feelings for the deceased than most other people here?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

ABIGAIL

Deeper feelings?

*(FATHER removes his white collar without drawing attention.  
Wipes sweat from brow and neck.)*

OFFICER

Yes. Being in love, for instance, would be an example of a deeper feeling.

ABIGAIL

What?! What a thing to suggest!

OFFICER

Well, I only noticed that you were the only guest here tonight who seemed genuinely mournful. In fact, Father Rabinowitz here presumed you were Adolfo's wife. Or sister.

ABIGAIL *(Defensive)*

He was a fine man, that's all. Anyone who was noticing would have noticed that. *(Pause.)* Except now that he's a vampire I'm not so sure how fine he really was. But so what if I thought he was a fine man?

OFFICER

If you did love him, you might have gotten it into that head of yours to hide his body, for fear of what might happen to him if a mob of vampire-believer-inners got a hold of him out on the city streets on the way to the cemetery. You wouldn't want to see your love's body desiccated.

ABIGAIL

But he's a vampire!

OFFICER

But you didn't believe that until just a few minutes ago. And even now you could be ranting that way to throw us off your trail. You're not as stupid as you seem.

*(Notices FATHER has removed his collar.)*

ABIGAIL *(Defiant)*

Yes, I am!

JARED

I – I'm pretty sure she is, Officer.

ABIGAIL *(To JARED)*

Hey!

OFFICER

Father Rabinowitz, you've removed your collar.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

FATHER

Yeah. It's hot under all this black.

OFFICER

Sure, I'm hot too, under all this navy blue. But as a cop, I would never remove my uniform on the job. I also happen to be Roman Catholic, born and raised. And I have never known a priest to remove his collar while being a priest.

FATHER

*(Puts collar back on.)*

Well it seemed to me the funeral was basically wrapped up, there not being a body, and all. If it's offensive, I'll put the blasted thing back on, all right? *(Pause)*

OFFICER

Ms. Claire Easterly? When did you get here?

CLAIRE

Shortly before the ceremony began, Officer Reinrassig. I was outside on the street, watching them mop the blood off the street lamp pole. It almost made me late, in fact.

OFFICER

You have a rather morbid fascination with death, Ms. Easterly.

CLAIRE

I'm not afraid of it like most people are, if that's what you mean. In fact, it is a passionate academic interest of mine.

OFFICER

Uh huh. Now, you lived across the hall from Mr. Mendoza, that right?

CLAIRE

I did. But I have the park view.

OFFICER

That must be delightful. Now, no one saw you among the neighbors poking their heads into Mr. Mendoza's apartment that night. Were you at home?

CLAIRE

Yes, as a matter of fact.

OFFICER

Can anyone verify that?

CLAIRE

*I can verify that.*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

Right. Uh. .. Ms. Beaumont, did you arrive with your husband – (*Realizes CANDACE isn't there.*) Oh – has she stepped out again?

CLAUDE

Yes, she's lying down in the other room, Officer. She's been feeling a tad unwell.

OFFICER

Well, I'll catch her later, then. So – this vampire tale. It's getting to you all, is it?

CLAUDE

It's a way to while away the time, is what it is. What's with all this callous questioning?

OFFICER

Well, surely you realize the full implications of this vampire theory.  
(*Various questioning expressions.*)

OFFICER

If Adolfo Mendoza exhibited vampire-esque symptoms when you all knew him, then he didn't die at his home last week. He died *before any of you ever met him*, and has been vampir-ing around ever since. Therefore his suicide or murder, or whatever, several days ago – was a fake. Furthermore, at the very least there must be a second vampire – who bit *him*. And I'd bet that whoever that supernatural beast is, he would get a kick out of the irony in attending his or her victim's fake funeral. So. Which one of you is the vampire that bit Adolfo? Come on now, you've got the entire New York police force out after you, you may as well come clean and plead insanity and save yourself some trouble.

(*Pause. Actors look confused, except ABIGAIL who is terrified.*)

(*OFFICER watches them for a few moments, then laughs heartily.*)

Ha ha ha! ...Jeeze, you're a spooked crowd, aren't you? Hey, lighten up, I'm just screwing with you. Now listen. You're all under suspicion of stealing a corpse. We all down at the station expected a prank like this; didn't think anyone would be able to pull it off. So whoever you are, congratulations. But – and I don't mean to toot my own horn, but – your victory will be short-lived.

ABIGAIL

Do you mean to suggest that one of us stole the body?!

CLAIRE

Dear, he suggested that ten minutes ago.

ABIGAIL

That's crazy! Why would one of us want to steal a vampire?!

CLAUDE

Abigail, I don't think Officer Reinrassig quite buys into your little supernatural theory.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

No, not so much. And I would also warn you all to consider your rights and watch what you say. If you're in on the corpse's disappearance, it seems likely that you also had something to do with the man's unusual death.

BETTY-JO

All right, I do apologize for dropping my professionalism, but clearly the funeral is over. Now, I have to ask, what is it you all are gossiping about? What made his death so unusual?

OFFICER

Thank you, Ma'am, I think I'd best go over the facts for everyone in the room who might not have had the sharpest eye on the news this week. Adolfo Heliodoro Mendoza was found in his apartment on the evening of \_\_\_\_\_ (*six days prior to current day*), not breathing. Marks on his neck indicated the cause of death was strangulation. A suicide note, the most long-winded blow-hard epic novel I've ever read, written with the most excellent penmanship, was left behind. Handwriting positively identified as the victim's. (Pause.) But as I said earlier, how one can manage to strangle oneself is beyond me.

JARED

Do suicide victims usually leave long-winded epic notes?

CLAIRE

No, they're usually rather concise.

OFFICER

So in my opinion, Adolfo was murdered. And I have a feeling that there's someone in this room who knows a lot more about it than he or she is letting on.

FATHER

Ah, Christ. This is gonna take forever.

*(Everyone looks sharply at FATHER.)*

JARED

Man, you're the baddest-talking priest I've ever met. I almost like you.

OFFICER

Sir, I gotta say you haven't behaved the slightest like a priest all evening. Must have been a pretty progressive place where you studied.

FATHER

Oh, well I –

*(Lights out again. Various reactions. Exit FATHER, unseen.)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

BETTY-JO

Relax, everyone, stop freaking out on me, will you?  
(*Lights up.*)

ABIGAIL

I *hate* that!

CLAIRE

Well, I think I will be on my way, then. Quite frankly, if the body doesn't feel obligated to stay at its own funeral, I don't see why we should linger around.

CLAUDE

I think I'll find Candace and head out with you.

OFFICER

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry but no one is leaving this building. Corpse-stealing is a serious offense. The finder of the perpetrator gets a big fat wad of a raise, and I aim to be that finder. So. You'll all kindly sit tight. There's plenty of food and alcohol to keep you occupied. (*To BETTY-JO*) Interesting choice – food and beer at a funeral.

BETTY-JO

Yes, we like to keep our customers happy. It's logical, really. Your loved one dies, what would you rather do – dress in black and cry or drink gin and munch on cheese fries?

OFFICER

Quite a progressive establishment.

BETTY-JO

(*Flushes with pleasure.*)

Why, thank you.

OFFICER

Now. First things first. I want to talk to the priest, or whoever he is – (*looks*) Father? Where did that Rabinowitz character go?

(*Various reactions as they realize he's gone.*)

OFFICER (*Into radio*)

Yeager, have you barred all the exits? Good. We've got a suspect on the loose. (*To Everyone*) All right, I'm going after the rabbi –

JARED

Priest.

OFFICER

Whatever. You all amuse yourselves for a few minutes. Okay?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

**END OF ACT I**

*(During intermission, actors mill around with Audience members,  
waiting for OFFICER to return.)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

**ACT II**

(Enter OFFICER with FATHER.)

OFFICER

Look who I found hiding in the electrical closet. Father Rabinowitz, or whoever you are, you are under arrest for suspicion of stealing a dead body out of its casket at its own funeral. There must be an official term for that, but it escapes me at the moment.

FATHER

If you let go of me, I'll explain! I can explain everything! I'm not really a priest, okay?

OFFICER

I suppose you only turn into one at midnight on the night of a full moon.

FATHER

What?

CLAIRE

That's werewolves, Officer. Completely different animal.

OFFICER

That's enough out of you! (*To FATHER*) Now who are you and what are you doing stealing a stranger's carcass?

FATHER

I'm not the stealer! And I'm not the murderer.

*(Pause as he gathers himself.)*

I'm an actor. Well, an actor by trade, but I've been having trouble finding work lately. I'm down on my luck. Down and out, as they say. I've been needing a job in the worst way. My friend's studying for the priesthood; he's been hooking me up with some gigs around town.

JARED

First I've heard a funeral described as a gig.

ABIGAIL

You lied to us?

OFFICER

Fake priest, out-of-work-actor, and as of now, the prime suspect.

CLAIRE

Officer, you can't expect to arrest him on such flimsy evidence.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

No, but (*To FATHER*) don't be planning to take any trips any time soon.

FATHER

Oh, no problem there, Officer, all my appointments through November are in the Metropolitan area. Uh – Brooklyn doesn't count as a trip, does it?

CLAUDE

I'm lost. Officer, why would he steal Adolfo?

OFFICER

As I said to Mr. Callaghan, the dead body of a supposed vampire could be worth some money. As this guy freely admits, he's pretty hard-up.

CLAIRE

I'm not so sure about that.

OFFICER (*Into radio*)

Yeager, I'm going to begin a full search of the premises for that body. Meet me in the lobby. (*Exit.*)

CLAIRE

I would find that hard to believe. The thief would have to be a rather short-sighted individual. The body's rotting away; it won't be recognizable for very long. Depending on the ambient temperature, the skill of the hospital workers who oversaw the preservation process, how much plastic surgery he's had – in two weeks at the very most, he'll be a pile of decomposed slime. Who would pay money for that?

CLAUDE:

(*Again with the subtle sarcasm*)

A gardener? Decomposed slime is an excellent fertilizer. Have we got a gardener in the house?

JARED

It's a good point, Claire. What do you think, Father?

FATHER

I didn't steal the stupid corpse, all right? (*Pause.*) The name's Mort.

JARED

Mort. Gotcha. So here's something I don't get. If Adolfo was an already-dead vampire then why –

CLAIRE

*Undead.*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

Sorry, an undead vampire – then why'd he stage his own death?

CLAUDE

What a pertinent question you've posed there, Jared.

CLAIRE

Maybe he wanted attention. Create a stir. These creatures tend to be superfluously melodramatic, you know.

ABIGAIL

Who do you suppose the first vampire was that bit him?

JARED

One of us, naturally. The cop's got that right, at least.

CLAUDE

You think so?

JARED

Sure! Wouldn't you take some sick pleasure in attending the funeral of your own victim? I'll tell you – if I'd bitten him, I wouldn't have missed this for all the blood in my body.

*(ABIGAIL edges away from him.)*

CLAUDE

How about we approach the question analytically, what? Now, the first vampire had to either have been a straight female or a gay male vampire.

JARED

Why'd he have to be gay?

CLAUDE

Come on, think. If you were a vampire would you go around sucking strange guys' necks?

JARED *(Shudders)*

Guess you're right.

CLAUDE

Exactly. So that narrows it down, then, what? The other vampire is either a woman or a gay male.

CLAIRE

Congratulations; you've narrowed it down to three quarters of the population of Manhattan. Now we're getting somewhere.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE

No, but he's here in this room. Have you been paying attention?

JARED

All right ... (*Surveys room*) Abigail!

ABIGAIL

(*Startled out of her mind.*)

Aaahh! What!

JARED (*Reconsidering*)

Nah, she couldn't have pulled it off.

CLAUDE

I wouldn't think she could pull off much of anything.

ABIGAIL

Hey!! I can pull off Gershwin to knock your heart out of your skull!

JARED

So – that narrows it down to Claire, Betty-Jo, or the fake priest.

FATHER

I'm not a woman!

CLAUDE

No, but you could be gay.

ABIGAIL

He's not gay, he's a priest! And what about you?

CLAUDE

Ha ha ha ha! I'm married!

JARED

Claire wears a lot of makeup.

CLAUDE

And she knows an awful lot about vampires.

CLAIRE

I'm also quite well-read on werewolves, although the literature is comparatively limited. Zombies, I can hold my own.

JARED

Be right back.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

(Exit JARED. Enter OFFICER.)

OFFICER

Well, the corpse appears to be nowhere in this building. Whoever took it managed to find one hell of a hiding place, as our men outside didn't see anyone leave carrying a dead guy. Impressive work, whoever you are. Imaginative smoke-and-mirrors effect you managed to set up in the dead guy's apartment, too.

ABIGAIL

Oh gosh! Oh, don't make jokes about that! And that poor photographer!

BETTY-JO

You – you haven't told us everything about the night of Mr. Mendoza's death, have you, Officer? What are these oddities you all keep alluding to?

CLAUDE

You mean besides the strangulation suicide?

OFFICER

I think we all know what Ms. Casper means. All right, but no one go getting all hysterical on me. Okay? (*Pause*) The paramedics who took away the body .. It was in the bathroom, and ... well, the medics swear that when they lifted Adolfo onto the stretcher, his reflection didn't show in the mirror. Now, of course they had a photographer there taking pictures of the scene. But on his way back from the building, he was fatally attacked by a psycho dog in Riverside Park. The camera has been lost. So we have no photos of the corpse. There. That's it.

CLAUDE

A mental dog?

(Enter JARED.)

BETTY-JO

I did wonder why the obituary had no photograph.

OFFICER

Now, it being Halloween and all, and with that spare vial of blood being found in Mr. Mendoza's medicine cabinet, we figure the killer was having a little fun.

BETTY-JO

But how did he accomplish the mirror effect?

OFFICER

Aw, come on, those paramedics work fifteen-hour days. They'd just found a dead guy. The room was crawling with forensics experts, police, neighbors trying to get a peek because the commotion woke nearly the entire building. I'd say the paramedics' testimonies are questionable, at best.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

*(Enter CANDACE, stumbling on shaking legs to her seat. She looks comically wretched. Ghastly pale/yellow with black circles under her eyes. The puncture marks are now obvious.)*

CLAUDE

Candace, Peaches, you're not looking so much better. Are you sure you don't want to go home and turn in early?

CANDACE

Before we're done with the funeral? That would be rude.

CLAUDE

Well, technically, Loveliness, without a corpse –

OFFICER

Ms. Beaumont, I'm awful sorry, but I can't let you leave quite yet, but if you want to spend the rest of the evening lying down in the other room, that'd be fine.

CANDACE

Oh, I don't like that drafty place, I'm feeling worse every time I wake. With the noises on the street and the pigeons flapping at the windows.

JARED

Sounds like a rollicking good time in there.

CLAUDE

Ms. Casper, can't we get the maintenance to take care of the windows in there?

CANDACE

I let one of the maintenance guys in, but he couldn't budge the windows. Two of them are ajar, and I just can't sleep for the noise!

CLAUDE

My poor Lamb Chop. For God's sakes, isn't there somewhere else she can go? Those pigeons carry diseases, you know. I don't want her coming down with the bird flu.

CLAIRE

Candace, Dear, what is that on your neck?

CANDACE

What?

CLAUDE

Oh! Honey Pie, you've hurt yourself. What do you have, a bug bite?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

*(OFFICER inspects CANDACE's neck; ABIGAIL strains for a view.)*

CANDACE

I can't see it. Where can I lie down?

ABIGAIL

Aauggghh! It's the bite of the vampire! The vampire's got to her! He's out there, lurking – feasting upon her whenever she leaves the room! We have to keep her away from him!

OFFICER:

All right, that clinches it, the prankster is in this room. Jared, where did you go just now?

JARED

Wha - ?

OFFICER

You left the room. Where did you go?

JARED

The bathroom man, Jesus. *(Pause)*

OFFICER

Father Rab – oh, whoever you are. Where did you disappear to a while ago?

FATHER

I was trying to leave but your cohort down there wouldn't let me.

OFFICER

You were trying to leave because you had just pricked Ms. Beaumont's neck!

FATHER

I was trying to leave because you found out I wasn't a priest and I freaked out.

OFFICER

Who else has left the room tonight?

CANDACE

Me.

OFFICER

Besides you.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

FATHER

*(Pointing at BETTY-JO)*

Her!

BETTY-JO

*(Jumps, startled.)*

Oh, don't be insane! I was calling the hospital, for Chrissakes.

FATHER

You were outside in the hall when the lights went out!!

BETTY-JO

So? *Nothing happened* when the lights went out!

FATHER

The body disappeared!

BETTY-JO

How do you know when the body disappeared?!

FATHER

I'm *just supposing!!*

CANDACE

Where can I lie down?

OFFICER

*(Yelling above the commotion)*

Everybody!!!

*(Waits for silence.)*

Now. I gotta be honest, you all are too spirited a bunch for me to handle. I'm going to need some help here. Some more ideas. Anyone else have questions for the suspects besides me? Anyone?

*(Audience is invited to interrogate witnesses. If the director has chosen to give the audience small roles listed in the Appendix, this is the time to let them testify. Five-ten minutes is a good time to allocate, depending on enthusiasm. OFFICER moderates the "interrogation." BUSBOY is not in the room.)*

OFFICER

Okay, shall we review what we know so far?

ABIGAIL

Yes. Claude and Jared and I stated that we have never seen Adolfo during the daylight. He never would go out to lunch, never ordered food or drinks at our lounge. He had the most pristine skin and flush to his cheeks and red to his lips that you'd ever seen; even

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

Claire the Vampire Expert thinks so. And now he's flown the coop, out of his own coffin. Therefore, he's a vampire and he's been drinking Candace's blood all evening.

OFFICER

Beautifully summarized, Ms. Abigail. But I was referring to the body of evidence we have regarding each of the suspects who could have conceivably killed Mr. Mendoza and/or stolen his body.

ABIGAIL

But we've agreed that he was a vampire. What's the big mystery?

OFFICER (*Ignoring her*)

So. We have Mr. Jared Callaghan, who is hungrily pursuing the sum of \$2000. We have the fake priest, who –

JARED

Mort.

OFFICER

Who's Mort?

FATHER

Me.

OFFICER

Okay. Mort ... who could also use some extra cash. We have Ms. Abigail, who had most likely been in love with Mr. Mendoza, and lovers are always knocking each other off left-and-right for God-knows-why. We have Ms. Betty-Jo Casper, the funeral parlor director, who obviously exerts the most control in this building, what windows and doors are locked and unlocked, when the lights go out and come on –

BETTY-JO

As I said, we've been having electrical trouble –

OFFICER

– *and* who was here before everyone else arrived tonight – alone with the casket. And finally we have Ms. Claire Easterly. Now, Ms. Easterly –

JARED

What about Claude?

OFFICER

Yeah, well I'm skipping him because I can't manage to stir up a motive on his behalf. And frankly it's kind of embarrassing to try pronouncing that utterly ridiculous last name.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE

It's been in the family for generations, I'll have you know. We've had a world-renowned historian trace it back to the fifteenth –

OFFICER

And finally we have Ms. Easterly with the grizzly curiosity, who will arrive at the scene of any morbid atrocity at the drop of a hat. Or a blunt instrument. Who pours over the newspapers for tales of murderous cats at Foxwoods, and people who choke on cherries in West Village lounges. And then one night, a death occurs right across the hall from her, in her own apartment building. The place is crawling with curious neighbors awakened by the ruckus ... and yet, Ms. Easterly is not among them. (*Turns to CLAIRE.*) Blood and gore at your fingertips, Ms. Easterly, not a ten-foot stroll across the hallway. May I ask what kept you away?

(*Pause*)

CLAIRE (*Haltingly*)

I – I'd had enough for one day. I saw a few squirrels plummet to their deaths during my afternoon walk, and one nearly fell squarely on my head. I needed a rest.

OFFICER

Hm. You've been actively encouraging Ms. Abigail here in her little vampire theory. Planting ideas, helping along the colorful conversation. Quite an effective method of diverting attention from the real matter at hand.

CLAIRE

As I said, I have a wealth of knowledge on the subject, and I enjoy discussing it. As any academic does! I do not appreciate your implications, Officer. Why would I commit murder? I'm filthy rich! I have everything I need! I live in the most expensive, desirable, exclusive apartment building on the Upper West Side; 24-hour doorman or no 24-hour doorman.

CLAUDE

You know I was wondering about that. If Adolfo could afford to live in a place like that, why can't I? We've got the same job. With what *I* make at that damn blood bank I can barely scrape out \$550 a month!

CLAIRE (*Scoffing*)

Then unless you signed a lease in that building in 1945 under rent control, you're out of luck, Mr. Laycuroyle.

CLAUDE

L'Ecureuil!!

CLAIRE

If you say so.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

But then how did Adolfo do it? He didn't sign a lease in fuckin' 1945.

ABIGAIL

Oh! Oh! He was selling his corpses on the black market! That's why he checked the obituaries! He bit them and killed them and sold them!

*(She can only deliver the "obituary" line if an audience member has been assigned the role of the Hot Dog Vendor, and has already delivered the information regarding the obituaries.)*

FATHER

Haven't you all already hashed this out? Who'd want to steal rotting corpses?

*(By now, CANDACE has slumped over in her seat, face down on the table. Doesn't move.)*

CLAIRE (*Impatient*)

If they're undead, they won't rot. Have any of you paid heed to a word I have said?

OFFICER

You might want to watch what you say without a lawyer present, Ms. Easterly.

CLAIRE

What – now you're accusing me of smuggling vampires onto the black market trade? (*To ABIGAIL and JARED*) Look, if you want to work within a plausible framework, let's say, for the sake of argument, Adolfo *did* sign his lease before 1945.

ABIGAIL

How could he have done that? He can't be over thirty-five.

JARED (*Catching on*)

He may look it, but if he's a vampire who knows how many hundreds of years he's been traipsing around with the taugth skin of a twenty-two-year-old? The bastard.

CLAIRE

You're catching on!

CLAUDE

Officer, I don't know Claire very well, but she certainly doesn't appear to be the murdering type – she's more of the voyeur, as she freely admits herself.

JARED

If you want my two cents, my money's on Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Hey!

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE

Didn't we already rule her out earlier?

JARED

We should have been taking notes.

CLAUDE (*To CANDACE*)

What do you think, Sugar?

*(Notices that she's slumped over and doesn't respond.)*

Candace? Candace, wake up, Honey Bunch.

BETTY-JO

Poor thing, she's dead asleep.

OFFICER (*Inspects CANDACE*)

Ms. Beaumont is not dead asleep, I'm sorry to say. She's simply *dead*.

*(Shocked reactions. ABIGAIL frantically begins asking audience members if they have a toothpick or pencil she can borrow.)*

CLAUDE

No! Oh, no! Candace? Sugar Dumpling? Oh!!! (*Wails.*)

CLAIRE

*(Inspecting CANDACE, fascinated.)*

God, that was diabolically clever, whoever's handy work it was.

*(Remembering her manners)*

Tragic, naturally.

JARED

Claude, Man, I'm sorry. Rough break.

ABIGAIL

*(Has found a toothpick or some kind of wooden instrument.)*

She's not dead! She's not! She's *undead!* Stand back, everybody, *stand back!* I'll save us!

*(Lunges at CANDACE with the object. JARED and FATHER catch her.)*

FATHER

What the hell's gotten into you?

ABIGAIL

Let go of me, let go! I'm trying to save us!

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

BETTY-JO

Abigail, what in God's na –

ABIGAIL

We have to drive a stake through her heart!

CLAUDE (*Sobbing*)

What?! What did my Darling ever do to you?!

ABIGAIL

She's a vampire now, Claude, she's been bitten! It's only a matter of time before she hits the streets!

CLAUDE

She's not a vampire, she's my sweet baby sugar lump! And she's dead! Oh!! Officer, can't I get her out of here, away from this lunatic?

OFFICER

Mr. Licro – (*gives up*) Claude, I am so sorry for your loss, but I have to ask you to remain calm until I call in the necessary authorities. We'll have an ambulance here in no time. In the meantime, Ms. Easterly, I am placing you under arrest for the murders of Adolfo Heliodoro Mendoza, and of Ms. Candace Beaumont  
(*Handcuffs CLAIRE.*)

CLAIRE

Me!

OFFICER

You've been sitting behind her during the times she's been in the room. There exist various types of poison that could have caused the symptoms she exhibited, if administered in small doses over the course of the evening. It would have been easiest for you to have done it – sitting where you were sitting. And to do it with those two little puncture marks – a diabolical little joke from the Vampire Expert herself.

CLAIRE

That's absurd!

OFFICER (*Into radio*)

Yeager, we've got a new corpse on our hands. Send an ambulance. (*To Everyone*) Now while we're waiting, I'd like to take a democratic vote on what happened to Mr. Mendoza's body. I'm kinda walking in circles here.

ABIGAIL (*Sarcastically*)

Didn't Claire do that, too?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

OFFICER

That'd sure be convenient; it'd clinch the whole case. But I don't see how she could have managed it. There must be an accomplice among you.

JARED

I don't think Claire murdered Adolfo to begin with. Or Candace.

BETTY-JO

Neither do I, Officer. Why don't we take a vote on all three things?

*(An actor or stagehand passes out ballots to Audience, with three questions on them:*

*1) Who killed Adolfo?*

*2) Who killed Candace?*

*3) Who stole Adolfo's body?*

*OFFICER may protest that the first two questions are already answered. After about five minutes, the ballots are collected and reviewed backstage, in preparation for an awards ceremony to be held after Curtain Call. By the time audience has finished voting, BUSBOY is in the room.)*

CLAUDE *(Still grieving)*

Ah, I can't take this. I can't. My poor baby! ...

BETTY-JO

I think he needs some room to breathe. *(To BUSBOY)* Mike, can you clear his table for him, please? Give him some room?

CLAUDE: *(Between sobs)*

Leave the Jack Daniel's. Just take the fries, will you?

BUSBOY

Certainly, Sir.

CLAUDE

Thank you.

BUSBOY

*(Begins to clear, but suddenly jumps back.)*

Ahh!

CLAIRE

What's the matter?

BUSBOY

Oh –it's nothing. I thought I saw a spider.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE (*Looks*)

There's no spider. Can you please take the garlic fries away?

BUSBOY

Certainly. Right away. (*Doesn't move.*) Er – perhaps the waitress can get those for you when she comes through. She'll be right back.

BETTY-JO

The waitress is busy, apparently. And I would like this done immediately, Mike; our guests come first.

BUSBOY

All the same, Ma'am, I wouldn't want the waitress to think I'm butting in on her territory. She's quite a she-demon, in case you haven't noticed.

BETTY-JO

But you've been clearing away food all evening.

JARED

He didn't take mine away. My garlic fries are right here.

ABIGAIL

Mine too.

CLAIRE

What's the matter, then?

ABIGAIL

Seriously, what kind of a busboy is afraid of a bunch of garlic fries?!  
*(Laughter all around. But gradually a thought strikes them all,  
 and they peer at the BUSBOY.)*

BETTY-JO

Yes, Mike, why *would* someone be afraid of garlic fries? You've been a very conscientious servant all evening, but to the people who ordered garlic fries you've been downright stand-offish.

BUSBOY

Ma'am, I beg your pardon, but I am terribly allergic to garlic, you see. I get hives.

JARED

Hives?

*(BUSBOY removes cap to wipe sweat from his brow. Now we  
 can see his face better.)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

BETTY-JO

Wait a minute, you're not Mike! Who are you?

*(Various gasps. BUSBOY realizes his mistake and hurriedly puts cap back on, but it's too late.)*

ABIGAIL

Adolfo?!

CLAUDE

Holy mother of god!

CLAIRE

Fascinating!

JARED

Adolfo Mendoza! You cheap son-of-a-bitch dick-wad!

OFFICER

What? *This* is Adolfo Mendoza?

BUSBOY

*(Runs for Exit, but someone blocks him. Realizes he's trapped.)*

All right, all right!

JARED

You ass, what the hell d'you think you were doing, staging your own fucking death?! Are you trying to get out of paying me my money? It's not going to happen!

ABIGAIL

No – that's not why he did it. He did it to escape my love. Isn't that right, you spineless coward? You don't know what's good for you; you're going to end up a very sad, lonely man!

OFFICER: *(Loudly)*

Everybody!

*(Everybody quiets down.)*

Thank you. Let's let Mr. – uh – *(To BUSBOY)* You are Adolfo Mendoza?

BUSBOY

Yes.

OFFICER

What the hell are you doing at your own funeral? *(Pause.)*

BUSBOY

Okay, I staged my death. Obviously.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

JARED

What kind of idiot pretends to commit suicide by strangulation?

BUSBOY

So it wasn't the best choice, all right? I never pretended to be Heisenberg.

CLAIRE

But how did you survive in the morgue at the hospital? How did you escape?

BUSBOY

Have you seen the way they run things at that place? I'm surprised they don't lose their patients.

OFFICER (*Into radio*)

An accident? You're shitting me. (*Pause.*) No, no, we'll just wait. It's quite an entertaining crowd up here, I don't mind.

BETTY-JO (*To OFFICER*)

What was that?

OFFICER

Ambulance has got into a small accident on 8<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup>. It'll be just a couple more minutes.

CLAIRE

Did anyone die?

OFFICER

No! Jeeze, woman!

BUSBOY

(*Staring at CANDACE*)

She's dead, isn't she.

CLAUDE (*Quietly*)

Yes.

BUSBOY

Isn't she is beautiful!

CLAUDE

Yes. (*Looks at BUSBOY.*) Why do you look so sad? You didn't even know her.

BUSBOY

Oh yes, I did! We met twice. At the office. Don't you remember?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAUDE

I remember. She didn't.

BUSBOY

*(Clearly hurt badly.)*

She didn't remember meeting me?

CLAUDE

What do you care?

BUSBOY

I – it's just – I ... How could she not even remember meeting me?

JARED

Man, were you in love with her?

BUSBOY

No! I mean – No! Of course not!

JARED

You totally were! *(Pause)*

BUSBOY

All right, fine. How could I help it?! And she never said a word to me! I was invisible to her, there was no way I could get her attention. It was maddening! I only wanted her to acknowledge my existence. If only for a little while. Just once.

OFFICER

And so you staged your own death, knowing that her husband and your colleague, Claude, would come and bring her to your funeral.

BUSBOY

I figured I could just get close to her for a minute or two. No one ever worries about a busboy. And I was right – she was friendly to me!

CLAUDE *(Suspicious)*

When?

BUSBOY

When? What when?

CLAUDE

She was friendly to you? When did you speak with her?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

BUSBOY

When I came to clear some food.

CLAUDE

No, you didn't. I was here; I didn't hear you talking to her.

BUSBOY

Er ... Oh, well, I suppose perhaps it was out in the hallway when she went to lie down.

CLAUDE

How did you know she was lying down?

BUSBOY

I – well, I actually went in to try to close a window in the room for her; it was drafty in there, and there were pigeons outside –

CLAUDE

*(Ready to hit him)*

You walked into a room alone with my wife –

BUSBOY

She invited me in! I swear, she invited me, just to give her a hand with the window!

CLAUDE

*(Lowers his fist)*

Didn't help her much, I take it.

JARED

*(A bell rings – he exchanges glances with CLAIRE, who is also beginning to get spooked.)*

Invited you in. She *invited* you.

*(Pause, as others for the first time begin to wonder whether all this vampire “nonsense” is really nonsense.)*

CLAIRE

Did you see her each time she went out to lie down?

BUSBOY

I – well yes, I was cleaning up out there. Took a while.

CLAIRE

*(More to herself)*

And she felt worse each time she came back in.

ABIGAIL

Ah! He *is* a vampire! *(Frantically)* Father! Do something!

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

Do something?  
FATHER

You're a priest!  
ABIGAIL

I'm not a priest!  
FATHER

You're dressed like one, close enough! Haven't you got a cross?!

*(Simultaneously:*

*1) CANDACE slips from her chair onto the floor and there is a commotion around her. Someone puts table cloth over her body;  
2) FATHER pulls out a cross made of two severed popsicle sticks;  
3) OFFICER pulls out a gun.*

*BUSBOY reacts to either the cross or gun – we can't tell which – and makes a break for the exit.)*

Stop! I'm warning you Mendoza, stop!  
OFFICER  
*(Fires at BUSBOY with gun, just before BUSBOY exits.  
BUSBOY apparently was not hit.)*

After him!  
*(CLAUDE, JARED, OFFICER Exit after BUSBOY, as lights go out. Commotion and shouts. CANDACE exits during blackout, unseen. Table cloth is arranged so that when lights come up, CANDACE's absence is not obvious.)*

I hate that!  
ABIGAIL

That's it, if Con-Ed doesn't waive this month, I'm gonna kill someone!  
BETTY-JO  
*(Can no longer hold in her exasperation.)*

You might want to watch your tongue around here.  
CLAIRE  
*(Lights up)*

You did it! Did you see? You scared him away with your cross!  
ABIGAIL *(To FATHER)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

FATHER

I think the officer scared him away with his gun.

*(Enter OFFICER, JARED, CLAUDE.)*

JARED

Man, sucks that you missed

OFFICER

I did not miss.

CLAIRE

Where is Adolfo?

CLAUDE

Gone.

JARED

Man, you had to have missed.

OFFICER

I won the \_\_\_\_\_ *(e.g. Pennsylvania Regional Hedgehog-Tossing Championships)* three years in a row. I have never missed a target from that distance.

ABIGAIL

He didn't miss, it's just bullets don't work with vampires. You should have let me at him with my toothpick.

JARED

There's no such thing as vampires, Abigail. *(Not confident.)* Um, right, Claire?  
*(Pause. CLAIRE doesn't respond.)*

ABIGAIL *(Shrieks)*

He took Candace!

*(Everyone realizes CANDACE is gone.)*

CLAUDE

That son-of-a-bitch, I'm going to skin him alive when you catch him!

OFFICER *(Into radio)*

Yeah, Yeager – we've got a corpse stealer on the loose. *(Pause.)* No, a different corpse-stealer. *(Pause.)* Well long story short, the first corpse, turns out, is actually the actual corpse-stealer. *(Pause.)* Listen, you kind of had to be here, man –  
*(Exit to finish conversation.)*

*(Pause. Everyone's a bit tired and disconcerted.)*

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

ABIGAIL

So. Bats, wolves, formless white mists, and busboys, apparently. Who'd have thought.

CLAIRE

Oh but it's not quite the same thing. Vampires *turn into* bats and wolves and white mists. To be busboys they just *dress up*.

JARED

What's the difference?

ABIGAIL

You academics are always so cryptic.

BETTY-JO

She's not cryptic, you're just not listening.

ABIGAIL

So ... he *was* a vampire, then?  
(*Pause*)

CLAIRE

I couldn't say, to be sure.

JARED

Come on, who gets hives from garlic?

FATHER

My sister gets hives from peanuts.

JARED

Who said anything about peanuts?

CLAUDE

Can we stop the bickering? I'm not in the mood anymore.  
(*Pause.*)

BETTY-JO

Staging his own death in order to get Ms. Beaumont to notice him for fifteen minutes? Your wife must have been a heartbreaker, Mr. L'Ecureuil.

ABIGAIL

No, aren't you paying attention? He staged his own death so that he could get at her to suck her blood.

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAIRE

So we'll scan the obituaries for the next few weeks, for any strange happenings around the West Side in the 80's.

JARED

Why there?

CLAIRE

That's Adolfo's old stomping ground. Vampires tend to be very fond of their homeland; they never stray far for long.

BETTY-JO

Well everybody, I hate to be a kill-joy, but the officer's gone to find the body and seeing as no one else in here is dead, I'd say we can wrap up the funeral.

ABIGAIL

Oh, good. I might still catch the crosstown in time to do my number.

*(Actors start gathering their belongings.)*

JARED *(To CLAIRE)*

I'm going to pay a little visit to your neighborhood tomorrow morning, now that I know where the bastard lives. Maybe I'll see you.

BETTY-JO *(To CLAUDE)*

Mr. L'Ecureuil, I am so terribly sorry for your loss. Have you .. er .. considered where you might like to honor your wife's memory?

CLAUDE

What?

FATHER *(To CLAIRE)*

You never miss a business opportunity, do you?

*(Handing CLAIRE his card)*

Hey listen, if you're ever short on staff, I also do rabbis and Presbyterian ministers.

CLAIRE

Anyone want to head up to 50<sup>th</sup> and check out that ambulance accident?

*(Various tired No's.)*

CLAIRE

All right, well I'm headed over to Brooklyn tomorrow at the crack of dawn, to watch that warehouse fire, if anyone wants to tag along.

FATHER

Fire?

Armstrong/ *Funeral!*

CLAIRE

A plastics factory caught fire this morning, it's on the satellites. It's a real beast, I'm sure it's got another twenty-or-so hours of steam left in it before it's contained. Have any of you ever seen a third-degree burn up close?

JARED

Jeeze, you're morbid, woman.

*(Everyone's near-ready to leave.)*

CLAIRE

Well, if anyone changes their mind, I'll be heading down to the South view around 6:30. Just take the G to Greenpoint.

*(Enter CANDACE. She looks absolutely radiant. Beautiful. Stunning. A healthy pink glow to her cheeks and red to her lips.)*

CANDACE

Hello everyone.

*(Various reactions, appropriate to each character. E.g. ABIGAIL may sport a regretful I-Told-You-So expression.)*

CLAUDE

Candace! My Baby! You're alive!

CANDACE

Oh Claude, Darling, I'm feeling ever so much better, you have no idea. What a tiring few days it's been! I am positively *dying* for some fresh air. Anyone care to head out with me ... for a drink? *(Smiles enticingly.)*

**BLACKOUT**

### Notes

Manhattan-specific jokes and references can be tailored to fit the town in which the performance takes place.

References to times should be altered to fit with the show's start-time.

So long as they do not distract from the main dialogue, ad-libbing is encouraged; it enhances the spontaneity of the piece.

While there are specific instances in which the Audience is invited to ask questions, Actors should be receptive to Audience participation throughout the show. The Audience is a continuous part of the scene, and any comments should be acknowledged and incorporated into the dialogue. Actors should also be comfortable engaging Audience in ad-libs and side conversations.

CLAUDE L'ECUREUIL's last name is pronounced "lay-cuh-ROY-ah." It's French for "squirrel."

The "vampire" conversations work most effectively if ABIGAIL is the only one who takes them seriously. CLAUDE and JARED are just staving off boredom; CLAIRE is interested from an academic point of view. Meanwhile, the OFFICER is happy to just have them distracted so that he can go about the "real" investigation. No one gives any credit to ABIGAIL's theory until the BUSBOY's scene at the end.

BUSBOY wears whatever uniform the real wait staff wear, including a cap pulled down so that we can't see his eyes well. He must always be out of the room whenever CANDACE is out. **The Audience should not suspect that he is part of the play, until the very end.**

When the BUSBOY is discovered at the end, he should act in such a way so that the Audience can't quite decide who-or-what he actually is.

### **If Additional Audience Interaction Is Desired**

For deeper audience involvement, below are suggested “characters for audience members.” Audience members should be approached and assigned their roles in the lobby, before they enter the theatre, and given a card with their character information printed on it. In assigning roles, it is important to observe potential audience participants before approaching them, to gauge who might be receptive to the idea.

Each character has two sets of clues, which he/she is allowed to reveal before Act I and after Act I, respectively. The clues should be *disclosed quietly, to a friend or fellow audience member, and not to a large group*. The idea is to start whispers and rumors circulating gradually around the room – not to give something away to everyone at once. The “audience actors” may be advised that intermission is an excellent opportunity for such hushed gossip.

Please note that these characters are suggestions, and that producers are free to make up their own – so long as the roles embellish, rather than encumber, the plot, and the script itself remains intact.

#### Characters for Audience Members

##### CO-WORKER AT BLOOD BANK:

*To reveal before Act I:*

“Adolfo would never go out to lunch with us. But he was an incredibly diligent, organized worker. He filed those blood vials with gusto.”

*To reveal after Act I:*

“Returning from lunch early one day, I saw him sticking a blood vial into his coat pocket. I thought it was kind of weird, but the boss had asked us to bring any potentially damaged vials to the nurse for review. So maybe he'd just found a damaged one.”

##### VENDOR AT HOT-DOG STAND WHERE ADOLFO BOUGHT HIS NEWSPAPER :

*To reveal before Act I:*

“He never bought a drink or food. Just a newspaper.”

*To reveal after Act I:*

“Sometimes he stands by until he’s folded the paper over to the section he wants to read first – the two times I’ve seen him do it, he’s gone straight for the obituaries.”

##### POLICE OFFICER WHO WAS AT THE SCENE OF ADOLFO'S DEATH:

*To reveal before Act I:*

“It was a pretty typical scene. Adolfo wasn’t

*Armstrong/ Funeral!*

breathing, his heart wasn't beating. We examined the room and found the note. No signs that anyone else had been there.”

*To reveal after Act I:*

“In his medicine cabinet, I found a small vial of blood. People have the weirdest habits in this town.”