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BLOODHOUNDS!!

An Audience-Participation Mystery

by

Eileen Moushey

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work may be given without obtaining, in advance, the written permission of Eileen Moushey and paying the requisite fee.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

STERLING MOFFAT - An eager, innocent, bright-eyed young man. Twenties.

Dressed in a sweater vest, bow tie, and glasses.

GLADYS THE SECRETARY - Before her transformation in the solution, Gladys is the stereotypical "frump". Following her metamorphosis she is a "fox".

Thirties/forties. She is dressed dowdily, including a horrendous cardigan sweater.

ARTHUR "LINDY" LINDSTROM - Good-looking, relaxed, confident. Forties.

Dressed in a rumpled suit, with a hat perched on the back of his head.

DOTTIE BERGER - A no-nonsense, Eve Arden type. Thirties/forties. Should be wearing a pants outfit of some sort, complete with tie.

HAROLD T. BONNER - THE "CHIEF" - Volatile, on-the-edge, impatient sort.

Fifties/sixties. Starts out in a suit and tie. His shirt displays a large inkstain on the pocket of his shirt.

FREDDIE BOROGROVES - Suave, urbane, a Cary Grant type. Very much at

home in the dinner jacket or tuxedo that he wears. Thirties/Forties.

MIRANDA "MIMSY" BOROGROVES - Thin, sophisticated, very Maggie

Smith-ish. Dressed in a long, flowing gown and cape. About the same age as

FREDDIE.

PROLOGUE - THE SET-UP

NOTE: The script mentions newspapers and locations around the Akron/Cleveland area. Change these to reflect your region. Likewise, you certain news stories mentioned should be changed to more timely scandals.

BLOODHOUNDS is set in the city room of a newspaper. In order to “set-up” the mystery, you may want to post a sign at the entrance:

AS YOU WALK THROUGH THESE DOORS, IT IS 1980.

YOU ARE ENTERING THE OFFICES OF
“THE AKRON STAR” - A TABLOID NEWSPAPER.

As the audience enters, all the actors, in character, will circulate among them.

Improvisational scenes will occur which foreshadow plot and character development. Once you have a complete understanding of the play, you may wish to devote a rehearsal to “brainstorm” on these.

2

PART I - THE PLAY

On the far SR apron is the Borogroves "sitting room" which consists of a large leather armchair and a small table with a portable phone. At the opening of the play, this area is in darkness. Just left of center stage is the city room of "The Akron Star". This consists of a long rectangular conference table, surrounded by six chairs. On the table are the remnants of previous meetings - papers, styrofoam coffee cups, ashtray, pencils, a phone, etc. Behind the table is a coatrack with several coats and hangers. Lights come up on the city room and STERLING enters from SL and speaks to the audience.

STERLING: It began here, in the city room of "The Akron Star." on Halloween weekend. The Star isn't exactly the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Or the Akron Beacon Journal. Actually, it's a lot like the Inquirer - Akron style. It's a tabloid. A rag. A cheap, sleazy, muck- raking scandal sheet. I love it. My name's Moffat. Sterling Moffat. I'm a reporter on the Star. Yeah, a cub reporter. And like everyone who works here, the news is my life. You could say I have ink runnin' through my veins. Instead of blood. *(GLADYS enters with pumpkin, and, oblivious to STERLING she begins to straighten the table. She puts the pumpkin in the middle and studies the effect. She is a timid, nervous soul dressed to blend in with her surroundings, including a cardigan*

sweater.) That's Gladys. She's a secretary here at the Star. *(To her.)* Hey, Gladys, how's it going?
Nice pumpkin.

GLADYS: *(Noticing him for the first time.)* Oh, Sterling, I didn't see you there. It's going fine, I guess, just fine.

STERLING: Notice anything different about me today, Gladys?

GLADYS: *(Peering through thick glasses.)* No-o-o, I can't say that I do, dear. Wait, is that a new bow tie?

STERLING: No, but look. *(He waves his left arm in front of her.)*

GLADYS: Your cast! Your cast is off!! Well, isn't that wonderful!
How does it feel? *(She grabs it, STERLING winces.)* Oh, dear, I'm so sorry.
And I still feel so bad about breaking your arm..

STERLING: It's okay, Gladys. It was an accident. *(GLADYS goes back to straightening, once more "out of the action.")* Gladys is a nice lady but a bit of a klutz. I was helping her wash windows at her place and she wanted to help by moving the ladder.

GLADYS: *(Muttering to herself.)* I thought he was getting a beer.

STERLING: Unfortunately, I was still on it at the time. *(DOTTIE enters.*

She's a no-nonsense, quick-with -a-comeback, ambitious lady.)

DOTTIE: Has anyone got a cigarette? I would kill for a smoke.

GLADYS: Now, Dottie, you know how the Chief feels about smoking.

DOTTIE: Stuff the Chief. If I don't get a cigarette soon, you're gonna see a case of PMS that'll make your glasses melt.

GLADYS: PMS?

DOTTIE: Pre-Marlboro-Syndrome. Come on, Gladys. I know you've been sneakin' 'em.

STERLING: That's Dottie Berger. An ace reporter on the Star. It was Dottie that broke the story about the albino peeping Toms in Kenmore. They don't come much tougher'n Dottie. She's one of my heroes. How ya doin, Miss Berger?

DOTTIE: *(Noticing him.)* Sterling, my little friend. Sterling, you little cub, you. Sterling, Sterling, Sterling. *(She pinches his cheek.)*

STERLING: Ouch! I don't smoke, Miss Berger, you know that.

DOTTIE: I know that, Sterling, my darling boy. I have cigarettes. In my car.

STERLING: And you want me to get them?

DOTTIE: If you would.

STERLING: Anything for you, Miss Berger, you know that. *(Holds out his hand.)* Keys?

DOTTIE: That's actually part of the problem, little Sterling 'o' mine.

STERLING: Ow, wow, Miss Berger, you locked them in the car again? *(She shrugs.)* I'll get 'em for you later, but see the story conference is supposed to start soon, and the Chief. . .

DOTTIE: Thanks, anyway, kid. Wouldn't want to upset the Chief. Don't worry, I'll be fine. *(She goes back to the chair, sits, puts her head down*

and beats the table. Then looks up again.) Nice pumpkin, Gladys. *(Head down again.)*

GLADYS: Thanks, Dottie.

STERLING: Dottie'd probably be working for the Plain Dealer or the Canton Repository only she's got one real bad problem. She's absent-minded as hell. That's the fourth time this month I've had to get her car unlocked. . .

LINDY: *(Entering)* Hey, if any of my ex-wives calls here looking for me, you haven't seen me, I'm on assignment at Graceland, I've been transferred to the Barberton office, I'm undercover at Three Mile Island.
. .

DOTTIE: I wish. *(GLADYS has been staring, open-mouthed, at LINDY.)*

LINDY: Hey, Gladys, nice pumpkin....Is something wrong?

GLADYS: No. . .I. . .I mean. . .we don't have a Barberton office, Lindy.

STERLING: Arthur Lindstrom. Better known as Lindy. The best reporter at the Star. He's the guy who blew the whistle on the foot fetish creeps at the podiatrist convention. With a little help from his ultra-secret source, "Deep Toe". . .

LINDY: *(Noticing STERLING)* Sterling, give me a clue. What's with Gladys? Is she always like this, or just with me.

STERLING: Just with you, Lindy, just with you.

LINDY: In love, eh?

STERLING: 'Fraid so, Lindy.

LINDY: Damn!! Are you sure?

STERLING: Tell her she looks nice. Compliment her.

LINDY: Okay. *(Returns to her.)* Say, Gladys, that's an awful pretty sweater. Did you knit it yourself? *(GLADYS, still open-mouthed, nods dumbly. LINDY to STERLING.)* It's a curse, kid, don't think it ain't.

STERLING: I want to grow up to be just like you, Lindy. *(LINDY returns to the group.)* Women go mad for him. It's like he has this secret

power. Not that it hasn't caused problems. He's paying alimony to three ex-wives and there's a rumor that there are "Little Lindy's" all over Northeast Ohio. *(The CHIEF enters. He's impatient and worried - a direct contrast to Lindy's laid-back style. He drops his coat in DOTTIE's lap. He also has a large ink stain on the pocket of his shirt.)*

CHIEF: Coffee, dammit, coffee!

DOTTIE: Hey, do I look like a hat check girl.

CHIEF: No, but that ain't a hat.

LINDY: It's gonna kill you to hang up the old guy's coat? Maybe he left a cigarette in the pocket from before he quit.

DOTTIE: You're right, Lindy, it won't kill me to hang up his coat. *(She goes to the coat rack and hangs it up, after checking the pockets.)*

CHIEF: *(Barking)* Coffee!! *(No one moves.)* Coffee, dammit. Gladys? And someone get rid of the pumpkin.

GLADYS: *(Mustering her courage.)* Now, Mr. Bonner. Chief. We've been through this before. I don't make coffee. I take dictation and notes and I'll do everything a good secretary does, but I don't buy make, or bring coffee. Oh, and I don't do windows, either.

DOTTIE: No, she gets Sterling to do 'em.

LINDY: Hey, d'ya notice he finally got the cast off?

DOTTIE: Yeah, I'm thinking of throwin' a party. Say, Lindy, *(sotto voce)* can you spare me a *(she pantomimes smoking)*.

LINDY: Gee, Dottie, whatever do you mean?

DOTTIE: C'mon, Lindy, give me a smoke.

LINDY: Dottie, Dottie, Dottie, . . . the only time I give a woman a cigarette is after an incredible, unforgettable, indescribable, night of . . . *(He notices GLADYS who is biting a knuckle and whimpering)* DINING. After a really great meal. *(He takes the last one from the pack, puts it behind his ear and gives DOTTIE the empty pack. DOTTIE puts her head down again.)*

CHIEF: All right. Fine. We won't have coffee this morning. I don't need it. I gave up cigarettes, I can give up coffee. I gave up scotch whiskey, I can give up coffee. I gave up poker, I can give up coffee. Dr. Acres tells me I can do anything. Anything I want. I can laugh if I want to. Ha-ha. I can dance if I want to *(He does a few steps.)* And, if I have to, I can do without my last, teeny weeny little vice. But how does that make me feel. Angry? No-o-o. . . Angry is for when there's a dog barking and I'm trying to sleep. Angry is when I go to the bank and get behind the bingo chairman for Our Lady of Perpetual Flatulence. Angry is when *The Dukes of Hazard* is pre-empted by Jerry's kids. But I'm not angry now. How do I feel? . . . I think. . . yes. . . I'm. . . I'm. . . sad. Yes, very, very, sad. *(He starts to cry, silently.)*

STERLING: That's the chief. Harold T. Bonner. He's insane.

DOTTIE: Is he crying? I hate it when he cries. *(Noone answers. She looks up.)* Ah, gee, why didn't you tell me he was crying? I asked if he was crying.

GLADYS: *(Resolute)* It's not going to work, Mr. Bonner. Dr. Acres told me not to give in to your crying.

CHIEF: *(Grabbing pumpkin and holding it over his head.)* Either I get coffee or the pumpkin goes splat.

STERLING: *(To audience.)* S'cuse me. *(To the others.)* One pot of coffee, coming up.

LINDY: Thanks, kid.

CHIEF: Yeah, thanks. . .what is his name again?

DOTTIE: Sterling.

CHIEF: Sterling. Yeah, I remember. Stupid name for a copy boy.

LINDY: Cub reporter, really.

CHIEF: Not with a name like Sterling, he isn't. Cub reporters have names like Jimmy, or Buddy, or Wally. . .

DOTTIE: Well, his name is Sterling. And you better be nice to him.

CHIEF: Me, what? Not nice? I'm a pussycat. Right. Okay. Let's get back to the business of reporting the news. Anybody got any brilliant leads? *(Pause.)* How about any semi-interesting rumors? *(Pause.)* Nasty gossip.

DOTTIE: I heard there may be a shake-up in the mayor's office.

CHIEF: Any sex involved?

DOTTIE: No.

CHIEF: Corruption? Blackmail? Double-dealing?

DOTTIE: No.

CHIEF: So why are ya bringing it up?

DOTTIE: Some guy's retiring after thirty years and they're. . .

CHIEF: Unless he's a transvestite I ain't interested. Lindy?

LINDY: Some guy I know works at a fancy restaurant in Kenmore says the health department cited them for improper sanitation precautions. Seems they found fingernail clippings in the cole slaw.

CHIEF: Hmm. . .could be something. . ."Local Eatery Finds Body Parts On Salad Bar."

DOTTIE: Or "Finger Food at Akron's Finest."

CHIEF: Could work. What else do you have that's verifiable? *(Both shrug and shake heads.)*

DOTTIE: How about "Aliens Kidnap Dave Brennan, Force Him to Be Real Cowboy?" *(Replace this with a local bigwig that everyone will know.)*

CHIEF: Did it. November '89.

DOTTIE: "Voodoo and the Cleveland Indians. Why Mike Hargrove Keeps Live Chickens."

CHIEF: Please.

LINDY: "Highway Construction Completed. Orange Barrels to Leave Akron."

CHIEF: No one will go for it. Too far-fetched.

STERLING: How about vampires?

CHIEF: It has to be something to do with the season.

GLADYS: You mean autumn?

DOTTIE: No, I get it. . .Halloween, right, Chief?

STERLING: How about vampires?

LINDY: Something creepy. . .scary. . .and. . .BLOODY..

CHIEF: Yeah, BLOODY. . .that's the ticket. . .

DOTTIE: But what?

STERLING: How about vampires?

CHIEF: Did you say something, uh, Stanley. . .

STERLING: It's Sterling, Mr. Bonner. And I said, "How about a story on VAMPIRES?"

CHIEF: Keep the coffee coming, kid. And, remember, no matter how hard I beg, do not give me a cigarette.

8

LINDY: Wait a minute, Chief. . .

DOTTIE: Who mentioned cigarettes?

LINDY: Maybe the kid has something. Vampires. . . Could be an angle we could use.

DOTTIE: Sterling, you little creep, are you holding out on me?

STERLING: No, I'm holding out on him *(pointing to CHIEF.)* Orders.

CHIEF: I don't know, Lindy. Vampires. It's really kid stuff. Maybe if we threw in an Elvis slant.

LINDY: The 4-H story was kid stuff, too, remember, Chief.

GLADYS: And we're still getting nasty letters from the Dairymen's Association.

DOTTIE: I'm not doin' another story on cows. I know we don't have a helluva lot of standards here, but I draw the line on cow stories. . .

CHIEF: That issue outsold everything else we've ever done.

GLADYS: Lindy's lead-off on the Siamese twin karaoke singers did pretty well. . .

LINDY: Thanks, doll. . .I mean, Gladys. . . *(It's too late, she's gone "off again".)*

GLADYS: If you really like it I could make you one.

LINDY: Sure. I mean, make me what?

GLADYS: A sweater. Like mine. I spend most of my nights knitting. Alone.

LINDY: Sure, Gladys. Anything to help fill your life. Knit away.

DOTTIE: Knit me a barf bag while you're at it, okay, honey. Geez. . . give it up.

CHIEF: I don't know. Vampires. . .

STERLING: Vampires. Blood. Biting. Naked. . .necks.

CHIEF: You just might have something here, Sinclair.

STERLING: Sterling. I know I do. And if you let me write it. . .

CHIEF: Sorry, kid. I know you do a lot around here, but this babe has Lindy's name written all over her.

DOTTIE: Chief, EVERY babe has Lindy's name written all over her. Why don't you let me take a crack at it? My stuff's just as sensational and sleazy as Lindy's. Okay, okay, so I blew the OJ thing. How was I to know they'd actually acquit him?

LINDY: Sorry, Dottie, old girl. Whatd'ya think, Chief? "Vampire Victim Recalls Night of Terror."

CHIEF: "Bitten Bimbos Beg For Blood." I think I'm going to like this.

DOTTIE: "Prince Charles' butler reveals, "Prince Is Closet Vampire.""

GLADYS: I like Lindy's the best.

DOTTIE: Why am I not surprised?

STERLING: NOW WAIT A GOSH-GOLLY-SON-OF-A-GUN-DARNED-TOOTIN' OLD MINUTE!

CHIEF: Did he just yell at me?

GLADYS: Now, chief. . .

DOTTIE: He didn't mean it, Boss, the kid gets excited. . .

CHIEF: No, no, really. It's okay. I'm not gonna get angry. I'm not going to blow just because some KID yells at me. Anger is for when I get ink all over a \$50 dollar shirt. . . Anger is for when I listen to Rush Limbaugh. . . Anger is

STERLING: Uh, Chief. . .

CHIEF: Did I say you could call me "Chief". . .

GLADYS: Now, Chief, we all call you "Chief."

CHIEF: No, we don't ALL call me "Chief". He calls me "Mr. Bonner." Or preferably "Mr. Bonner, sir." And I call him "Streptococcus."

STERLING: That's Sterling, Mr. Bonner, SIR, Mr. Bonner. . . I think this should be my story, because, well, because. . . becau. . . (*the CHIEF is glaring at him.*) You know I could help you get that stain out of your shirt, I'm really kind of a whiz at that sort. . .

DOTTIE: He's right, Chief, the kid's a regular Hint from Heloise. . .

LINDY: Yeah, remember, all those shirts of mine with the lipsticks stains? Like new. And my silk boxers. Hey, let me tell you. . .

DOTTIE: *(To GLADYS)* Down, girl.

CHIEF: I don't care if he's Betty Flippin' Crocker. Nobody yells at Harold T. Bonner. Especially a punk kid who's still wet behind the ears and green around the edges. With a stupid, stupid name. Starsky. But I'm not gonna blow. I'm not gonna get mad. I don't have to get mad. But I am gonna get. . . get. . . what am I gonna get?

GLADYS: Sad?

DOTTIE: Ah, hell, I hope not. I'd rather he blew.

CHIEF: No, not sad. More urgent.

GLADYS: Anxious?

CHIEF: I'm not due for an anxiety attack *(checks watch)* for at least a week. No, I'm feeling, I'm feeling. . .

LINDY: Horny? *(To others)* Hey, it always works for me.

CHIEF: No, sh. . .wait a minute. . .*(Pause.)* Too late. It's gone. *(To GLADYS)* Another emotion unidentified. Damn. *(His mood is abruptly back to "normal")* Okay, where were we?

STERLING: Well, Sir, Mr. Bonner, Sir. . .

CHIEF: Call me chief, son. Damn, I wish I had a son.

GLADYS: You HAVE a son, chief.

CHIEF: I do. That's right. I do. Fine boy. Lives in California somewhere. That reminds me. Did we send him something last Christmas?

GLADYS: Yes, chief, you sent him a pottery ashtray.

CHIEF: I did? Damn stupid. Kid shouldn't smoke. Stupid present.

STERLING: I packed it real careful for you, Chieeeeef - Mr. Bonner. We all said, "Any ashtray that Mr. Bonner makes in his therapy group is real special and needs to be sent. . ."

CHIEF: You're all right, Stripling. Why don't you try writing a story for us sometime?

STERLING: Well, as a matter of fact, sir, I did have this idea about vampires. . .

CHIEF: Yeah? Go on. . .and so these vampires are like sexy dolls, right. . .

STERLING: Well, maybe, sir, but. . .

CHIEF: Or - better yet, their victims are sexy dolls, huh?

STERLING: Well, as a matter of fact, Mr. Bonner. . .

CHIEF: Starbuck, Starbuck, let me give you a little advice. . .

LINDY: Oh, damn, it's Father Knows Best. . .

CHIEF: Matters of fact, kid, are just that. Matters of fact. And boring. If people want to be bored they read the yellow pages. Or Norman Vincent Price or somebody. . . Never confuse the truth with a good story. What sells, kid, is fiction. And fiction dressed up as fact sells best. . . Do you think.. (*he notices LINDY's cigarette.*) He's got a cigarette. He's he's got a cigarette. . .

DOTTIE: Just a puff, Lindy, just a puff.

CHIEF: Am I trying to give 'em up, or what? Gladys!

DOTTIE: Lindy, anything. I'll do anything. . .

LINDY: You and every other dame in Akron. . .

CHIEF: Gladys! The memo. Did you give him the memo?

GLADYS: (*Looking through papers*) Now, Chief, Lindy doesn't smoke that much. . .

CHIEF: If I can't have a cigarette, no one can. And I don't care if its lit or not. Memo, Gladys, memo. (*She finds it and hands it to LINDY who slowly and methodically takes out his Zippo and sets it on fire.*)

LINDY: I hate memos.

CHIEF: I've had just about enough here. If you're not careful, Lindy, Stumpy here is gonna get to write that vampire story.

STERLING: It's Sterling, Chief, and if you'd only listen a minute, I could tell ya why I hafta be the one to write that story. I'm the only one that knows something. (*They look back and forth between each other.*) Something so big, it'll make Lindy and Dottie's scoops look like cow patties. . .

LINDY: You been hangin' out with the Chief too much, kid.

DOTTIE: Sterling, I've forgotten better stories than you could write.

CHIEF: It better be good, kid, or you could be deliverin' papers instead of writing for them.

STERLING: I hafta write the story because I've got the source.

CHIEF: Whatdaya mean, the "source"? This is a story about vampires, for Pete's sake. Even I'm not this nuts.

DOTTIE: Don't count on that, Chief. Spill, Sterling.

STERLING: *(He takes a breath and announces.)* There is a real, live, honest-to-God vampire on the loose in Akron.

LINDY: And you thought that "Orange Barrels Leaving Akron" was too far-fetched.

STERLING: It's true!! I swear it is!!

GLADYS: Now, Sterling, you've had your bit of fun but we have to get busy with this week's issue.

STERLING: If I can bring you proof positive that a vampire is operating in Akron, can I do the story?

CHIEF: Kid, you bring me proof positive of that and you can write all the stories including my obit 'cause I would drop dead.

STERLING: You all just stay here. I'll be right back.

LINDY: Bring me a danish will ya, kid? Though a Swede will do. Anyone named Inga or Britt. *(STERLING exits.)*

DOTTIE: *(Calling after him.)* Wait, Sterling, let me give you some money so you can buy me a pack of cig. . .*(sees the CHIEF's face).* . .ci. . . nammon gum.

CHIEF: Okay, so how do you think we should go with the vampire thing, Lindy?

LINDY: I was thinking maybe our vampire only went for women. How's this, Chief?. . .our vampire - let's give him a name. . .Vic, or Vinnie. . . anyway, . . .this old blood-sucker doesn't bite the neck. . .

CHIEF: He doesn't? Then how..?

LINDY: He aims a little lower, say about here. . .*(He gestures toward GLADYS' chest, she whimpers. DOTTIE begins to fan her.)*

CHIEF: I can see some great pictures here.

GLADYS: *(Looking offstage.)* Oh my God.

LINDY: For Pete's sake, Gladys, I didn't lay a finger on you.

DOTTIE: What the hell?

CHIEF: What in the name of God do you have there, Stringer?

STERLING: *(He enters with the vampire's victim in tow. This will either be another actor, or, if possible, a local "celebrity." They will be very pale (make-up) and will have two tiny pieces of toilet paper stuck to the side of the neck.)* It's the vampire's victim.

GLADYS: It's Mel, the janitor. *(Or, if a celeb is used, she will say "It's _____")*

LINDY: But what the hell is wrong with him?

CHIEF: *(Moving his hand in front of the staring eyes.)* Damn. Reminds me of my roommate at the hospital. Yoo-hoo, anybody home?

VICTIM: *(In monotone)* It was dark. I was bit. Now I want blood.

DOTTIE: Reminds me of a few guys I dated. What's wrong with him, Sterling? And why does he have those little bits of toilet paper stuck on his neck?

LINDY: That's what I do when I cut myself shaving. . .to stop the blood.

STERLING: I found him wandering around outside this morning.

VICTIM: It was dark. I was bit. Now I want blood.

STERLING: He was still bleeding a little, till I put the toilet paper on it. And he keeps repeating the same thing.

DOTTIE: There's a note pinned to his chest..

CHIEF: *(reading)* "Stop me before I bite again." Words cut from the Star. This is unbelievable, kid, unbelievable. And big. Eat your heart out, Geraldo. A real-live vampire victim interview!

14

VICTIM: It was dark. I was bit. Now I. . .

CHIEF: Yeah, yeah, I know, now you want blood. Could be a problem getting a bigger story if that's all the guy's gonna say. Though we can always just make it up. . .

DOTTIE: It's worked before. . .

LINDY: There's only one way this story could get any hotter. . . instead of one interview - two. The victim AND the vampire.

CHIEF: Damn, that's thinkin like a reporter, Lindy!

DOTTIE: Yeah, but how we gonna catch him?

STERLING: Or her. *(To their looks of disbelief)* Hey, I did some research. Vampires are as likely to be women as men.

GLADYS: *(Digging through the mess on the table.)* Wait a minute.

We've been running an ad on the back page of the paper for over a year. *(She finds it.)* Here it is. *(reading)* "Scared to go out at night without a turtleneck? Worried about blood-suckers who don't work for the IRS? Did vampires turn your last hot tub party into a blood bath? Call the vampire-removal specialists at VAMP-NO-MORE. Dial 1-800-555-BITE"

VICTIM: It was dark. I was bit. Now I want blood.

CHIEF: Can somebody get him to shaddup. I gotta make a call. *(He dials as the lights go down on the City Room and come up in the Borogroves Sitting Room as the phone begins to ring. FREDDIE enters and picks it up.)*

FREDDIE: FREDDIE Borogroves. Hallo. Yes. . . Yes, that's me. *(Listens.)* Hm. Hm. I see. Tsk, tsk, sounds quite nasty. Hm, hm. *(MIMSY enters with glasses of red wine. She gives one to FREDDIE.)* Thank you, darling. *(Into phone.)* No, no, not you. I was talking to my wife. *(MIMSY sits on the arm of his chair, and as he listens, FREDDIE will kiss her hand.)* Well, yes, could get sticky. You want something very quiet, discreet. *(Listens.)* Yes, yes, that's what they usually say or a variation thereof. Hm-uh, hm-uh. *(He covers up the phone.)* I think we've got a "biter", my love.

MIMSY: Where?

FREDDIE: *(into phone)* And where did you say you were calling from? *(Listens)* Akron. Akron, Ohio. In the States.

MIMSY: Akron. I've never been. Why is it we never get calls from Honolulu, or Tahiti. It's always the places whose names start with A.

Altoona, Albany. Akron. Oh, dear.

FREDDIE: (*Checking watch.*) We can be there in about five. Hold tight. Right. Cheerio. Your name again. Bonner. Mr. Bonner. Alright, alright. Chief. (*He hangs up.*)

MIMSY: A job?

FREDDIE: Afraid so, precious. Do you mind so very much?

MIMSY: As long as we're together, my darling, I would go to the ends of the earth.

FREDDIE: And have. Regrets?

MIMSY: None. How's your drink?

FREDDIE: Yummy as always. What is this?

MIMSY: Guess.

FREDDIE: (*Takes a sip and goes through the chewing, swishing, etc., that is performed by wine tasters everywhere.*) Let's see. Italian, right? (*MIMSY nods.*) Judging by the color and light refraction, my guess is rather young. Fruity, but not effete. Taciturn, yet impudent. Mischevious. With short, almost stumpy, legs. A Florentine poison, 1988. Splendid year.

MIMSY: You are uncanny, my sweet. And the rest?

FREDDIE: Wait. Listen. (*The sounds of Glen Miller's "In The Mood" are heard.*) Igor is playing his phonograph. One of our songs. Before we fly to Akron, my love, may I have this dance?

MIMSY: I think you're just trying to avoid the quiz. . .(*But she is caught up with him and they dance. As it draws to a close, FREDDIE speaks.*)

FREDDIE: Well, we should be off, dear. (*He takes another sip.*)

MIMSY: You don't know do you, darling? I've finally caught you out! Admit it!!

FREDDIE: (*He drains the glass.*) A bricklayer. Male. Age 22. Red-hair, blue eyes, 5'10, 165 pounds or thereabouts.

MIMSY: And?. . .

FREDDIE: (*He licks his lips.*) AB positive. (*Crossfade. Back at the City Desk, where all are present except for the VICTIM.*)

DOTTIE: When did he say he'd be here?

CHIEF: He said in about five.

LINDY: Five what?

CHIEF: I don't know. Five hours, five days. And he said "we" so I'm assuming he has an assistant or something?

DOTTIE: Well, he better get here soon or the Beacon is bound to *(she is interrupted by the sound of flapping wings, and FREDDIE and MIMSY glide into the room, execute a swirl and a dip ala Fred & Ginger before the amazed group.)*

FREDDIE: Good evening. We got here as quickly as we could. Ran into a terrific headwind over the Balkans. And if my darling wife here had had her way we'd have stopped to take the waters at Bath.

MIMSY: Would you believe he wouldn't even let me stop for a bit of shopping in Hong Kong!

DOTTIE: No! The beast! *(To LINDY through clenched teeth.)* Who the hell are these people?

CHIEF: *(Also through clenched teeth.)* Who drinks bath water?

FREDDIE: Then of course, there's always the bottleneck at Kennedy.

LINDY: It's a bitch all right. . . *(With clenched teeth)* How'd they get in here?

FREDDIE: I say, what a jolly pumpkin!

GLADYS: *(Also through you-know-what)* Should I call security?

STERLING: *(Staring at Mimsy.)* Isn't she beautiful? So graceful and elegant and sophisticated and. . .

DOTTIE: And weird. Don't forget weird. Both of 'em.

CHIEF: Bath water in Hong Kong. Is it time for my pills?

FREDDIE: Oh, dear, my manners! *(He executes a military type bow, with click of heels, etc.)* My card. *(He presents it.)* We are the Duke and Duchess of Moldavia. Frederick and Miranda Borogroves.

GLADYS: *(Looking at the card.)* It's them, sir, the ones you called.

CHIEF: But how??? Where??? Introduce me to your travel agent,

sometime, okay. Listen up, here's the situation. We are pretty damned sure there's a vampire here in Akron. I know it sounds nuts, but there it is - Blood-Suckers on parade in Akron. We want you to find 'em and bring 'em to us so we can interview them for the Star.

FREDDIE: I see.

CHIEF: You can do that, can't you? You're vampire busters, aren't you?

FREDDIE: Oh, not exactly. That sounds so. . .so. . .violent.

MIMSY: We think of it more in terms of helping those less fortunate than ourselves. Biters are such a crude bunch.

FREDDIE: Slinking around the world, nipping the necks of just anyone, without the slightest regard for where they've been. It's quite sad and tawdry, really.

MIMSY: Tawdry is the word. Unquestionably tawdry.

STERLING: I love the way you say that word, Mrs. Borogroves.
TAHDRY.

MIMSY: Oh, do call me Mimsy, dear heart. You must all do that. Call us Freddie and Mimsy. We're going to be such friends, I just know it! No formality, please.

FREDDIE: We may be blue bloods, but that doesn't mean we don't have a deep and abiding love for you red-blooded types, heh, heh. Now, to work. The victim.

STERLING: I'll get him. *(He exits.)*

CHIEF: He kept repeating the same thing. It was driving us nuts.

DOTTIE: Speak for yourself, Chief. Say, I don't suppose either you or the Mrs. happen to have a smoke on you?

FREDDIE: No, we both quit, simply ages ago.

CHIEF: Health reasons?

MIMSY: No, we hated the way it dulled our taste buds.

FREDDIE: Not to mention the nicotine stains on our. . . *(STERLING returns with VICTIM who has a grocery bag over his head. FREDDIE looks quizzically at him.)* What's the reason for the. . .the. . .

GLADYS: I thought covering might quiet him. Like my bird.

VICTIM: *(After being uncovered and seated.)* It was dark. I was bit. Now I want blood.

MIMSY: *(She takes his hand and pats it while FREDDIE inspects his neck.)* Of course you do, dear, and why wouldn't you? Freddie, whatever are you doing? No little snacks, darling. Igor packed us a complete valise and you know how petulant he gets when you spoil your appetite.

FREDDIE: Wouldn't dream of it, darling. I was just inspecting the neck. Hmm. Hello, that 's odd. It's very neatly done. The work of an unusually sensitive artist who truly cares about the aesthetics of his craft. Unusual in a biter.

CHIEF: Sensitive? Artist? Aesthetics? We ain't talkin' about Norman Rockwell here. We're talking about a dirty, no-good, blood-sucking, life-threatening GHOUL who deserves the old wooden stake pounded right through the ticker.

MIMSY: *(Swaying as if to faint.)* Oh, dear.

STERLING: *(Rushing to help her sit down, by bringing a chair next to victim.)* She's going to faint. Sit down. *(He crouches before her patting her hand.)*

FREDDIE: *(Advancing on the CHIEF.)* DON'T YOU EVER SAY THAT AGAIN!!

CHIEF: What? Norman Rockwell? You hate Norman Rockwell?

FREDDIE: No, *(whispers)* STAKE.

CHIEF: STAKE?? *(MIMSY cries out again.)*

FREDDIE: Shshhshh. . . . DON'T SAY THAT WORD. Mimsy can't stand that word.

DOTTIE: I wouldn't take the little woman to Sizzler for dinner if I were you, Fred.

STERLING: Can't we do something?

FREDDIE: I'll be right back, my darling. Now where did we leave the valise? *(He exits.)*

LINDY: *(To DOTTIE.)* I don't think it was anything the Chief said. I've seen that reaction too many times. Another woman falls prey to that ol' Lindy magic.

VICTIM: It was dark. I was bit. Now I want blood. *(MIMSY tosses her*

head as if she's having a bad dream and comes face-to-neck with the victim. Stretching slightly she can just reach his neck and, throwing her arms around him, goes at it.)

GLADYS: Hey, there, what's she doing!!

STERLING: Mrs. Borogroves. . .Mimsy. . .Um don't do that. . .

DOTTIE: Oh, wow, she's one of 'em! Look, she's really going at it.

LINDY: She picked him? When I'm here? The lady obviously has no taste.

GLADYS: Hey, you, stop that right now!!

STERLING: I don't think she's gonna let go. Maybe we should. . .

CHIEF: At home we use the hose on the dogs when they get like that. *(FREDDIE returns with a small flask and a styrofoam cup that is filled with a very small amount of stage blood..)*

FREDDIE: Oh, dear, Mimsy, as soon as my back is turned. . . Here, darling, Daddy's brought you some num-num. *(He holds the cup to MIMSY who deserts the victim for it. She doesn't actually drink but lets the stage blood cover her upper lip ala a milk moustache.)* There, all better, darling? *(To STERLING)* You, there, what's your name?

CHIEF: That's our cub reporter, Stratford.

STERLING: Sterling.

FREDDIE: Sterling? Stupid name for a cub reporter, what say?

CHIEF: I do say.

FREDDIE: Anyway, Sterling, take him *(pointing to the VICTIM)* away. The bag is probably a good idea, too. *(STERLING replaces the bag on VICTIM'S head and leads him offstage.)*

CHIEF: You want to tell us what's going on here?

DOTTIE: Can't you guess, Chief? I got a pretty good idea.

LINDY: So do I.

STERLING: So do I.

CHIEF: Yeah, but I wanna hear them say it.

FREDDIE: Say what?

MIMSY: Is this a game? Like twenty questions? Oh, good, I love games.

GLADYS: You two are vam. . .vampires, aren't you?

FREDDIE: Well, of course we are! My goodness, what else would we be?

MIMSY: *(As she uses FREDDIE'ss handkerchief to wipe the blood from her mouth.)* Didn't we tell you? We don't hide it, you know. We've been out of the closet for centuries, my dears.

CHIEF: Wait a minute, this is terrific. What the hell! Lindy, we don't need to know who's sucking up to *(VICTIM's name)*. We'll just interview the two of them. Whatd'ya say? Your pictures, your story, plastered all over the front pages. "At Home With Mr. & Mrs. Vampire. Lifestyles of the Rich and Bloody."

FREDDIE: Oooh, 'fraid not, old sport.

MIMSY: Borogroves don't "do" press, I'm afraid.

FREDDIE: The last vampire that talked to the press was my cousin - the count. Count You-Know-Who. And what kind of a "thank you" did he get? A You-Know-What You-Know-Where.

MIMSY: Such a shame. He used to give piggy-back rides, and play hopscotch. And what a cook! Why the things that man could do with shallots.

FREDDIE: Then he talks to one reporter and BAM, before you know it Bram "Mr. Buttinski" Stoker is writing books and inciting riots.

DOTTIE: So, we're back to square one. Find the Akron vampire and get him - or her - to talk.

LINDY: But do we really need them, Chief? I've been thinking. It can't be that hard to track a vampire. We all know some things about them. Like. . .they can't stand garlic. . .

STERLING: Or crucifixes. Or wolfsbane. . .whatever that is. Is that kinda like parsley?

DOTTIE: Yeah, I remember! And they can't see their reflection in the mirror.

CHIEF: So?

LINDY: So, if Lord and Lady Plasma here won't help us, we'll just track him, or her, ourselves. Using what we know of vampire lore.

STERLING: And they sleep in coffins and will die if they're exposed to the sun. . .(*FREDDIE and MIMSY look at each other and burst out laughing.*)

FREDDIE: (*Wiping his eyes, laughing.*) I'm sorry. It's just so funny. People still believe all that poppycock, don't they??

MIMSY: Wolfsbane! (*They go off again.*)

FREDDIE: Next to my beverage of choice, there is nothing I love better than a good Italian dinner of pasta, a green salad, and, of course GARLIC bread.

MIMSY: Although I do have to go easy on the. . . the. . .

FREDDIE and MIMSY: WOLFSBANE!!! (*They explode into gales again.*)

FREDDIE: Not only does the crucifix not bother us, but we will have you know we are both pillars of the Moldavian Anglican Church. And do you think my Mimster could be this lovely without being able to see her reflection in the mirror. Goodness knows she spends enough time in front it. I do hope she's got something to look at.

MIMSY: I'm not entirely sure I like that remark, FREDDIE, my love. Shall we talk about the nose-hair plucking sessions every Friday night?

FREDDIE: Ooh, touched a nerve, did I, Precious. Sorry, sorry. Kiss-kiss. Anyway, about the only true bits of vampire lore, as you phrase it, refer to the coffin and the sun. And even that is not exactly correct. Mimsy and I have a lovely double coffin. Actually, several years ago we broke down and got the water-bed version. For my back.

LINDY: (*Snickers*) Yeah, that's why I got mine.

STERLING: How about the sun?

MIMSY: Well, all I can say, is thank God for sunscreen. We use SPF 200. All over.

STERLING: All over. (*He is in love.*)

FREDDIE: And we never said we wouldn't help you. We will help you find the Akron biter and if he or she wants to be interviewed, fine. But we're afraid if you don't know what you're doing someone could get injured.

MIMSY: I think we should explain about "biters", FREDDIE darling.

FREDDIE: Yes, yes. First of all, you have to accept something. Vampires are everywhere. In every country and city on earth. But we exist peacefully with you ordinary folk because, number one, we don't give interviews, and two, the vast majority of us do not go traipsing about indiscriminately sucking off the populace.

MIMSY: So to speak.

FREDDIE: So to speak. But, every once in a while, a renegade will surface. A biter. Mimsy and I will try to find them before the angry mobs do and try to rehabilitate them.

DOTTIE: Wait a minute. If you and the Mimsmeister here don't go around doing the chomping - slurping routine, how do you get your blood?

FREDDIE: We have a simply marvelous cellar. Some of it purchased.

MIMSY: Thank God for college students.

FREDDIE: And some of it donated. (*To their looks of disbelief*). When faced with the prospect of the local vampire running amok, you'd be amazed at how quickly people will ante up a pint or two.

GLADYS: But, that's. . .that's blackmail. Or extortion. Or something.

LINDY: No, it's not. It's like paying Orkin to keep termites away. It's buyin' protection.

MIMSY: I'm not sure I appreciate the comparison.

STERLING: Is (*name of VICTIM*) gonna be a vampire now? 'Cause he got bit by Vampire #1 and then Mimsy. . .

DOTTIE: Yeah, once was bad enough, but after old Mims got a hold of him, he's gotta be a quart low.

FREDDIE: No, it takes repeated sucking sessions, before he would be, well, the technical term is German, but we just call it. . ."vamboozled". Keep him walking and give him lots of beer and he'll be right as rain in the morning.

GLADYS: So, if all that stuff about vampires isn't true, it's all just old wive's tales, how are you ever gonna find the biter?

FREDDIE: By absolutely brilliant detective work, my dear. And, of course, we do have the certain advantage of knowing how his. . .

LINDY: Or her. . .

FREDDIE: Quite so, or her, mind works. And I think its safe to say that we have it narrowed down considerably from the entire Akron population. Wouldn't you say, Mims?

MIMSY: Most definitely. I think we can comfortably eliminate most of the people in Akron. In fact. . . *(they look at each other.)*

FREDDIE: Oh, we are on the same wave length, aren't we, my darling. Yes, this may come as a shock to you, but we are completely convinced that the Akron biter is. . .

MIMSY: It's patently obvious. . .

MIMSY and FREDDIE: One of you. *(There is general denial and exclamations of innocence.)*

FREDDIE: Well, now, really, you saw the note on chest. Was that not a cry for help?

MIMSY: And what did you do? You called us to unmask the biter. *(All ad-lib "It wasn't my idea. STERLING's the one who found him. GLADYS remembered the ad., etc.")*

DOTTIE: Hey, I'm a whiskey and soda girl, myself.

GLADYS: I don't even like tomato juice.

CHIEF: Would I have given up cigarettes if I was gonna live forever?

STERLING: Could I be a vampire and not know it?

LINDY: I've got enough trouble with live women, I'm not gonna get messed up with dead ones.

FREDDIE: Trust us on this. One of you is a vampire and we will find you out. In order to do that, Mimsy and I will just have to find out all about you. All the little everyday things.

MIMSY: *(To GLADYS)* And while I'm at it, I just may give you some make-up tricks I've picked up over the centuries.

FREDDIE: And, of course, we're going to have to see if we can't possibly find the vampire's resting place. In fact, I think that's a job for a friend of mine. *(Calls for HOST/HOSTESS. She enters)*

FREDDIE: There you are, darling, it's been forever. Kiss-kiss. Do you think you might get some help and look for a coffin. Hmm? Do be a

dear. Mimsy and I are just going to chat up this group. See if we can't find out just who the Akron Biter is.

HOST/HOSTESS: Anything for you, dear chap.

FREDDIE: Righto. Come on, group, it's talk to Freddie and Mimsy time. (HOST/HOSTESS explains about the clue hunt.)

PART II - THE CLUE HUNT

The Production Manual provides directions for designing and staging a clue hunt. This can be as involved as you like, can be an actual physical search, or can be contained within the room. The type of event and facility will determine the nature of the clue hunt. Regardless how the clue hunt is done, at the end, each team will ultimately visit the vampire's resting place briefly OR have a short opportunity to view a *picture* of the lair. The coffin holds the following:

1. Lighter fluid
2. A coat hanger
3. A knitting needle
4. Popcorn
5. Cigarettes

During the clue hunt, the "suspects" will circulate. All will stay "in character" and exhibit behaviors, etc., that will tie in with what is found in the casket.

1. The Chief will be eating popcorn. He can smoke or not, but only has a Bic-type lighter or matches.
2. Lindy will smoke (or pretend to) and will flick his Zippo like a nervous habit.
3. Dottie and Gladys, if asked, will show that they only have a Bic-type lighter.
4. Sterling has neither cigarettes nor lighting implements.

THE VERY BRIEF SOLUTION SCENE IS NOT INCLUDED IN REVIEW SCRIPTS. IF YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE THE ENTIRE ACTING COPY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION ABOUT PRODUCING, PLEASE CONTACT US:

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PROPS/SET DRESSING

Pumpkin

Anything to suggest a newspaper city room - tables or desks, chairs, notebooks, coffee cups, phones, coffee pot, etc. newspaper

Large wing-back chair & small side table

Phone

Wine glasses w/"wine"

Flask

Stage blood

Coffin with: cigarettes, zippo lighter, 1knitting needle, box of popcorn, hanger

INCLUDED in the Production Packet (sent electronically)

Clue Packets with Answer key and flow chart

Blank flow chart to help in making your own clue hunt.

Printed copy of ballots to reproduce (alternative to Clue Hunt)

Production Manual (the same for all shows)

OPTIONAL

For a small fee we can send printed production packet, including Production Manual