

Suckers: A Vampire Play

by

Duncan Pflaster

SUCKERS: A VAMPIRE PLAY

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SUCKERS: A VAMPIRE PLAY

Dramatis Personae

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <u>Romaine Williams:</u> | Female, straight, late 20s, Black |
| <u>Jeff Schwartz:</u> | Male, straight, early 30s, Jewish |
| <u>Kendal:</u> | Female, a vampire, apparently late 20s. Rich's partner. |
| <u>Rich:</u> | Male, a vampire, apparently late 20s. Kendal's partner. |
| <u>Elvis:</u> | Male; Gay, owner of a coffeehouse, a vampire, ageless, maybe looks late 30s? |
| <u>David Lamb:</u> | Male, gay, 17. Loves musical theatre. |
| <u>Harry Razalas:</u> | Male, early 40s, a barista, goth. |
| <u>Raquel Lopez:</u> | Female, Cuban, a regular at the coffeehouse who wants to be a vampire. |

SETTING

Act I

1. A park in the suburbs of a large city.
2. A coffeehouse, "Le Bras et La Jambe"

Act II

1. A back room of the coffeehouse
2. The kitchen of the coffeehouse
3. Outside the coffeehouse.

The play can be performed in one continuous act, if desired.

TIME

Nowish.

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SUCKERS: A VAMPIRE PLAY was originally produced in June 2009 as part of the inaugural Planet Connections Theatre Festivity, in New York City, with the following cast (in order of appearance):

| | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Romaine | Paula Galloway |
| Jeff | Jared Morgenstern |
| Kendal | Rebecca Hirota |
| Rich | Alan McNaney* |
| Elvis | Shawn McLaughlin |
| David | Joe Fanelli |
| Harry | Eric C. Bailey* |
| Raquel | Katherine Damigos |

* Indicates member of Actors' Equity Association, An Equity Approved Showcase.

Fight Choreography was by Christopher C. Cariker
Costume Design was by Mark Richard Caswell
It was directed by the Playwright

A portion of the proceeds was donated to the Red Cross Blood Bank

In 2013, the play was produced again by The Alley Theater in Kentucky, as part of their *Inhuman: A Festival*, starring Pam Newman, Jeremy Gernert, Kenn Parks, Katie Hay, Brian Kennedy, Kimby Peterson, Daniel Smith, and Micah Cassidy

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ACT I SCENE 1

A public park, late at night. Rather dark. The sound of crickets. JEFF and ROMAINÉ walk on through the grass, Jeff leading.

ROMAINÉ. The park is so spooky at night.

JEFF. It's not spooky, it's romantic.

ROMAINÉ. If you say so. Is it much farther?

JEFF. Not far now, Romaine.

ROMAINÉ. It's cold. *(She stops walking)*

JEFF. Here, I'll warm you up. You're going to enjoy this, trust me. It'll take your mind off all your troubles at work. You won't have to think about Stupid Ashley anymore.

ROMAINÉ. Oh geez, I *hate* her. Did I tell you what she did yesterday?

JEFF. Yes.

ROMAINÉ. I swear, I'm just going to up and quit one of these days.

JEFF. Why don't you?

ROMAINÉ. Please, in this sucky economy? I'd have to be an idiot. You know, I always thought book publishing would be my dream job, and now it's spoiled. She makes me feel so stupid all the time, when I know I'm doing what I'm supposed to. I can't read her mind.

JEFF. It's not the job, it's only because of moron Ashley.

ROMAINÉ. I hate working with her. I have no idea who put her in charge of people at this job.

JEFF. It's probably the Peter Pan Principle. You know how people get promoted past the point where they're any good at their jobs?

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ROMAINE. That's the *Peter Principle*, honey. The *Peter Pan* principle is "I'll Never Grow Up".

JEFF. Oh.

ROMAINE. I'm just stressed- I don't even know if I'll have a job on Monday because of her losing the stupid Carrollton account. She managed to blame me for it with the big boss, without me even being *on the project*. I could *kill* her.

JEFF. Relax, honey. Calm down. I brought you out here to not talk about your god damn boss.

ROMAINE. Please don't blaspheme, Jeff.

JEFF. Sorry.

ROMAINE. You're crazy, dragging me out to the park in the middle of the night, to do god knows what. We could get mugged or something.

JEFF. We won't get *mugged*; we're in the *suburbs*.

ROMAINE. Where is this place we're going, anyway?

JEFF. Really nearby. (*They walk a foot or so*) In fact, here we are!

ROMAINE. Um, honey; there's nothing here. We're in the middle of the park.

JEFF. That's the point.

ROMAINE. There's not even a gazebo. It's just a clearing.

JEFF. Right. I want you to lie down in the grass with me.

ROMAINE. What?

JEFF. I like to come out here once a week to commune with nature. You know how it is; we work in the city, we're always in the city, we spend so much time there, it's like we live there. When I'm home here I like to relax, and this park is the greenest place I know. Once you get past the baseball field and the swings, it's a nice dark woodsy area. I come out here now and then to lie in the grass and look up at the stars and ponder my place in the cosmos. And I'd like you to do it with me. Come on. (*Jeff lies down in the grass.*)

ROMAINE. Baby? Jeff, baby?

JEFF. (*from the ground*) Yes?

ROMAINE. I love you, you know that, but I can't do this with you.

JEFF. Why not?

ROMAINE. Ticks. Lyme Disease.

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JEFF. Pardon me?

ROMAINE. Alice Walker got Lyme Disease from lying out in the grass. A tick bit her.

JEFF. Who's Alice Walker?

ROMAINE. She wrote The Color Purple.

JEFF. Oh.

ROMAINE. ...And she got Lyme Disease because she liked to lie out in the grass and commune with the cosmic whatever, just like you.

JEFF. I can't believe you won't do this with me. Look up at how beautiful the stars are! There's all that light pollution in the city. Here they really twinkle.

ROMAINE. I can see them from here. Honey, will you get up? I don't want you to get buggy either.

JEFF. No, I'm really serious about this; I want you to come down here and be with me.

ROMAINE. No.

JEFF. Only just for a second. It's not like I'm asking you to have sex out here or anything. Just lie down.

ROMAINE. It's giving me the willies.

JEFF. Listen- lie down with me. I mean it. This is really important to me. You *have* to.

ROMAINE. I understand that it's important to you, but I don't want to be chomped upon.

JEFF. What are the odds of a tick actually biting you? I mean, does that *happen*? That's just an incredible thing.

ROMAINE. Yes, of course it *happens*. Alice Walker, as I said. It *has happened*, innumerable times...

JEFF. Innumerable?

ROMAINE. "Without number".

JEFF. That's ridiculous. There *has* to be a number of times that it happens. That's how things work.

ROMAINE. So then, if something is priceless, it is free?

JEFF. Exactly. Lie down with me.

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ROMAINE. No, it's no good; I would like to oblige your little whim, but every time I even think about it, I imagine all these little bloodsucking ticks jumping all over me.

JEFF. Don't be ridiculous.

ROMAINE. Oh, I know, ticks aren't like fleas; they don't really jump. They just burrow into your skin, and sit there, gorging on your precious blood, growing bigger and fatter on your frangible...

JEFF. Frangible?

ROMAINE. (*continuous*) ...red bodily fluids, and incidentally possibly spreading disease as they sit quietly, unnoticed, like a furtive blonde hair on a lemon cheesecake.

JEFF. Okay, now you're making me paranoid.

ROMAINE. Good! Get up.

JEFF. No, lie down with me; you're putting too much stock in the obscure biographical details of some overrated novelist.

ROMAINE. Overrated? Alice Walker is a genius!

JEFF. If she's such a genius, how come she got Lyme Disease?

ROMAINE. She probably got suckered into it by somebody like you.

JEFF. Please, baby? Lie down with me; just for a second. One second.

ROMAINE. One second.

JEFF. Yes. That's all I ask.

ROMAINE. Okay, *one* second, Jeff. And that's all. And I'm only doing this because I love you. And we're having a tick inspection afterward.

JEFF. Sounds like fun.

ROMAINE. Okay, fine. (*She breathes deeply, to prepare*) I'm coming. (*She breathes some more*) Coming down in a minute. (*She breathes some more*) You know I'm only doing this because I love you.

JEFF. I know. Now would you stop hyperventilating already and just get down here?

ROMAINE. Okay, okay. (*She throws herself to the ground, picks herself up again, and dusts herself off.*)

JEFF. See, that wasn't so bad, was it?

ROMAINE. It was *awful*; I feel all dirty. Would you get up now?

JEFF. And weren't the stars beautiful from down here?

ROMAINE. Yes, they were beautiful.

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JEFF. Thank you, Romaine.

ROMAINE. You're welcome, now get up.

JEFF. Okay, okay. (*Jeff stands up. Romaine flicks on a lighter to look at him*).

ROMAINE. Okay, tick inspection.

JEFF. This is silly.

ROMAINE. You said you'd do it. My god, you're filthy. What, were you rolling around in the dirt?

JEFF. Only a little.

ROMAINE. Drop your pants.

JEFF. Huh?

ROMAINE. Drop your pants, so I can check your legs for ticks.

JEFF. But we're outside.

ROMAINE. I don't want you to get Lyme disease.

JEFF. Fine. (*Jeff drops his pants; change falls out of his pockets. Romaine gets in close to inspect his legs*). Oh great, there goes my change. Ow! Hey! you're pulling my leg hairs.

ROMAINE. Sorry. (*We hear a ukulele playing, from off, a few feet away, getting closer quickly. We also hear 2 voices singing in harmony. These are KENDAL and RICH*).

ROMAINE. Quick! Someone's coming- pull up your pants.

JEFF. Oh Geez. (*Jeff tries to pull up his pants*). Oh God, my zipper just broke! What should I do? Oh God, this is so embarrassing!

ROMAINE. Shh, just button the top button, and try to hold it together.

JEFF. It's not working; my zipper is wide open! This is terrible. I'll try to hold the fly shut.

ROMAINE. Don't do that; you look like you're playing with yourself. It's dark; they won't notice. Just be quiet, here they come. (*Kendal and Rich are heard singing from off, getting closer.*)

KENDAL and RICH. (*singing, from offstage*)

*O sing a song of everything,
With reason in our rhyme
Make the vaults of Terra ring,
For we have all the time.*

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*O sing a song of things that hide
Upon the earth, and delve beneath,
Remember all the things inside
Your mouth, like gums and tongue and teeth*

(Kendal and Rich finally enter, still singing. They smile at Romaine and Jeff, but don't stop singing. They are dressed in bright colors, with an emphasis on shiny, sparkly things, despite their summer clothes, they wear scarfs).

KENDAL and RICH.

*O Sing a song of blatant things,
Like sun and moon and holly wreath,
Of sidewalks and of wedding rings,
Purple mountain, blasted heath.*

ROMAINE. Hello. *(Kendal holds up a finger, as if to say "hold on a second"; they continue singing)*

KENDAL and RICH.

*O sing a song of nothingness,
Of no disease or crime
A solitude with no distress,
A paradise sublime.*

*O sing a song of everything,
With reason in our rhyme
Make the vaults of Terra ring,
For we have all the time. (End of song. Pause.)*

ROMAINE. Hello?

KENDAL. Why, hello! I *do* apologize for not answering you before; we were in the middle of a song, as we are often wont to be.

RICH. And we hate to be interrupted.

KENDAL. People try.

RICH. Oh, they *do*. But since we hate to be interrupted so much, they don't try very often.

KENDAL. Thank goodness.

RICH. Because then we'd have to kill them.

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KENDAL. And no one needs that.

ROMAINE. No, I suppose not. My name is Romaine.

RICH. A pleasure. And who is your sartorially impaired acquaintance?

JEFF. What?

KENDAL. Your pants.

RICH. They're open.

ROMAINE. His zipper broke.

JEFF. See? I told you they'd notice!

ROMAINE. This is Jeff.

KENDAL. Geoff with a G or Jeff with a J?

JEFF. Jeff with a J; it's short for Jeffrey.

RICH. Also with a J?

JEFF. Yes.

RICH. I see. Jewish?

JEFF. Yes.

KENDAL. Also with a J?

JEFF. Yes.

RICH. Excellent. We love the Jews. (*awkward pause*)

ROMAINE. And who are you?

RICH. We are... well, I guess you could say that we're explorers.

KENDAL. After a fashion.

RICH. You see, explorers, like anthropologists, by their nature, are never *in* fashion, so we have to chase after it.

KENDAL. And speaking of fashion, I have a safety pin you could use to fix your trousers, Jeff.

JEFF. Oh. Well, thank you very much. (*Kendal produces the safety pin like a magic trick, goes to Jeff and hands it to him. She stands unnecessarily close, watching intently as he fixes his pants.*)

KENDAL. Be careful not to hurt yourself. Even a little prick. You don't want to lose any blood out here.

JEFF. Blood?

ROMAINE. So you're explorers, you said? I thought you were singers; you sang very well.

RICH. Just because we sing, you think we're singers? How limiting! You might as well say that just because we eat, that we're eaters!

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KENDAL. Or sleepers! ...if we slept.

RICH. Which we don't do much of.

KENDAL. Though of course we do.

RICH. (*angrily*) So then I guess we're sleepers, too!

JEFF. There's no need to get upset. It was a compliment.

RICH. I doubt that. How often, in the midst of a compliment, are we angered? No, it was *not* a compliment, though it may have been meant as one. It was an attempt to limit us, to confine us, to make us comprehensible! No one understands me, and that's the way I like it! I am Rich.

KENDAL. Not "wealthy", you understand. His *name* is Rich. It's short for "Richard".

ROMAINE. Yes, we're familiar with the nickname.

RICH. And you, Romaine, you're named after a lettuce. How nice.

KENDAL. Just like a fairy tale. My name is Kendal.

RICH. Not short for anything.

KENDAL. Except volleyball.

ROMAINE. Nice to meet you. If you're explorers, what are you doing out here in the suburbs, in the park?

JEFF. ...In the dark.

RICH. Just out on a lark.

KENDAL. Oh Rich, there's no need to be so stark.

RICH. *That* was a snippy remark.

KENDAL. *Must* you be such an avuncular patriarch?

RICH. Oooh, very nice.

KENDAL. Thank you, I do try.

ROMAINE. Actually, what are you two doing here? Seriously.

KENDAL. Seriously? Pooh! What are *you* doing here?

JEFF. I brought Romaine here to relax and commune with nature. This little clearing gives a great view of the stars. I like to lie in the grass and look at them.

KENDAL. How lovely! Do let me try! (*Kendal immediately drops to the ground and looks up at the sky*) Beautiful! O glory of the heavens, how minty and firm a firmament! The stars shine so, like unto a twinkling sheep or pelican!

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JEFF. *A pelican?*

KENDAL. No. You know what I mean, like a... what's that bird with the giant beak? With the ocean?

RICH. Pelican.

KENDAL. No.

RICH. "Its beak can hold more than its belly can".

KENDAL. No! The bird ...with the thousand thousand slimy things?
Around the guy's neck?

ROMAINE. Albatross!

KENDAL. Yes, that was it! Oh Romaine, you're so smart about poetry!
Can we keep her?

ROMAINE. Look, I don't think you should be lying in the grass, Kendal.

KENDAL. No? Why not?

ROMAINE. There's a danger of ticks and fleas.

JEFF. And, apparently, Lyme disease.

KENDAL. Oh, really? Oh! Oh dear! (*Kendal stands up*)

RICH. Kendal, that was very foolish of you, not to realize that insects like to feast upon *human beings*. (*to Romaine*) Your timely intervention has saved us. You are a mighty protectress. We apologize for our callowness, Romaine.

ROMAINE. Oh. Well, you don't need to *apologize*. I mean, I was just looking out for your welfare. Jeff didn't even know about the Lyme disease until I told him tonight.

KENDAL. Oh, we have been fools!

RICH. If we had only thought, if we had only known!

JEFF. Don't take it so hard.

ROMAINE. Yeah, really.

RICH. Ooh! I've a brilliant idea!

KENDAL. Have you? What is it?

RICH. Why don't we bring our new friends to *Le Bras et La Jambe*?

JEFF. What's *Le Bras et La Jambe*?

KENDAL. It's a... well, a coffeehouse we frequent. It's open all night long.

RICH. And, thus, rather expensive; hence the name.

ROMAINE. *Le Bras et La Jambe*?

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KENDAL. It's French for "An Arm and a Leg".

JEFF. Clever.

KENDAL. Certainly not false advertising, if possibly misleading.

RICH. Elvis does like his little jokes.

ROMAINE. Who's Elvis? I mean, clearly not "The King", Elvis...

KENDAL. No no, he's a friend of ours. He runs the place.

JEFF. Is his name really Elvis?

RICH. No, of course not. It's a nickname. Everyone just *calls* him Elvis. His real name is James Dean.

KENDAL. ...So you can see why he'd want to use a pseudonym.

RICH. Among other reasons.

ROMAINE. I suppose.

RICH. Elvis will love you two.

KENDAL. I hope your arrival will put him in a better mood.

RICH. And you'll love the place. Let's go. I need some coffee.

ROMAINE. Actually, it's very kind of you to extend the invitation, but I need to get home. I have to be up early tomorrow.

KENDAL. Early on Sunday? That's a sin.

ROMAINE. For *church*.

RICH. And that's an irony. (*Jeff pulls Romaine downstage to converse semi-privately. Kendal and Rich follow innocently*)

JEFF. Oh, come on, honey... They seem like fun.

ROMAINE. Oh, I don't know...

JEFF. You've been saying we don't do enough stuff together.

ROMAINE. Staying out at a nocturnal French café is hardly what I had in mind. (*Kendal speaks from behind them, startling them*)

KENDAL. Oh, the *café's* not French. That's just the name.

RICH. And it won't be *all* night. And even if it is, there's a very simple solution.

ROMAINE. What's that?

RICH. Stay awake all night. Then, don't go to sleep until after church is over. You'll be there super-early, and, like they say, "the early bird gets the cross"!

ROMAINE. What?

RICH. You see, most human beings sleep in 24-hour cycles.

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KENDAL. Circadian rhythms, you know.

RICH. Yes, but they also have approximately 24 hours of *extra* time that they can stay awake without any ill effects.

KENDAL. Plus, you know what they have at the coffeehouse?

ROMAINE. What?

KENDAL. Coffee. That'll help you stay up.

RICH. Come with us.

JEFF. What do you say, honey? It sounds like fun.

KENDAL. And it's open mike night! There'll be poetry ...

RICH. Maybe even a little ukulele...

ROMAINE. We won't have to perform, will we?

RICH. Not if you don't want to.

KENDAL. But if you have a joke or two, and have a hankering for applause...

JEFF. Oh, I know a joke! So the President is in the Oval Office, right, and one of his advisors comes in and says, "Sir, I have some bad news. Last night three Brazilian soldiers were shot and killed in Iraq." The President shakes his head sadly and says, "How much is a brazillion?" (*pause.*)

KENDAL. Maybe no jokes then.

ROMAINE. Really, I shouldn't, I have to be up...

RICH. We also have a number of books there. Sort of a lending library. We have some exquisite first editions that might interest you, Romaine.

ROMAINE. Books?

KENDAL. Oh yes, Elvis collects illuminated bibles. It's really a glorious collection to behold, if a little bit patriarchal.

RICH. Now, Kendal...

KENDAL. You'd kick yourself in the neck if you missed it, I'm sure.

ROMAINE. Oh, all right. We'll come with you. After all, it's fun to cut loose now and then.

KENDAL. Yes, as Rapunzel said, it does you good to let your hair down and get out every once in a while.

RICH. Great! Follow us to the coffeehouse. It's just a couple of blocks away from the park. We'd better hurry- open mike has already started. Come on!

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KENDAL. Run! (*Rich and Kendal run frantically offstage. They run like children or Muppets, arms and legs flailing. Romaine and Jeff follow, after a second, walking*)

RICH. (*from off*) I'm serious! Run, Run! (*Romaine and Jeff break into a run and leave the stage. END OF SCENE*)

Scene 2

The coffeehouse Le Bras et La Jambe. It's nearly deserted. There is a small stage. The stage is currently occupied by ELVIS, who reads from a large book of Poetry. DAVID, a very gay, very young man wearing a shirt with a Broadway musical logo, is sitting and listening to Elvis' recitation. There's a small bar, behind which stands HARRY, the barista- he's dressed in black, with exaggerated gothic makeup. RAQUEL is sitting at the bar, drinking coffee, and ignoring Elvis; she twitches and does not look well. Kendal, Rich, Romaine, and Jeff enter during Elvis's reading, and stand just inside the door, afraid to interrupt. Jeff and Romaine are somewhat winded from running all the way.

ELVIS. (*reading Lord Byron*)

*So we'll go no more a-roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.*

*For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And Love itself have rest.*

*Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a-roving
By the light of the moon.*

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Thank you. (*Elvis bows, and there is applause, especially from David. Elvis sees the gang clustered in the doorway, and crosses over to them.*)

KENDAL. Ah, listen to those percolating words! Smell that potent coffee! It thrums in the blood like wine! These are the things of which life is made!

ROMAINE. It's not very crowded, is it? You made the place sound so... *happening.*

RICH. It's very popular with a certain crowd. You know- *nightlife.* (*He calls to the barista, who acknowledges him with a desultory wave*) Howdy, Harry!

KENDAL. Harry Razalas is our barista.

RICH. (*less kindly*) Hey, Raquel: (*Raquel gives him a twitchy nod.*) "Francis Scott Key!"

RAQUEL. Died of pleurisy in 1843.

KENDAL. (*to Romaine and Jeff*) Raquel's specialty is knowing how and when people died. It's a talent. (*shouting to Raquel*) "Liberace"!

RAQUEL. Complications from AIDS, 1987.

ROMAINE. Sort of a morbid parlor trick, isn't it?

RICH. Well, parlors are kind of morbid anyway, don't you think?

JEFF. What do you mean? (*Elvis by now has walked over to the newcomers. David follows, like a puppy.*)

ELVIS. 'Will you walk into my parlor?' said the spider to the fly..."
Rich! Kendal! (*Elvis kisses both of them on the cheeks, continentally.*) It's so good to see you both, as always. And who is this handsome fellow? (*Elvis kisses Jeff on both cheeks. Jeff is startled*)

JEFF. Uh, Hi.

KENDAL. Elvis, I'd like to introduce you to Romaine and her boyfriend Jeff.

ELVIS. Ah. How do you do? (*Elvis shakes hands with Romaine.*) Please enter, and when you go, leave behind some of that happiness you bring.

RICH. Elvis: it's Jeff with a J.

DAVID. Like Liza with a Z?

JEFF. What?

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DAVID. (*singing*) “It's Liza with a Z, Not Lisa with an S,'Cause Lisa with an S Goes ‘sss’ not ‘zzz’”! (*There is no response from the others. Spoken*) What. *Liza*. ...Minelli? Who *are* you people?

ELVIS. Allow me to introduce my ...protégé. This is David Lamb.

DAVID. What up?

ELVIS. You'll have to excuse him; he's just a trifle impetuous when it comes to musical theatre. The follies of youth.

DAVID. Huh? *Follies* is about *old* people.

ELVIS. ...And he's only seventeen. Excuse him again.

ROMAINE. Only seventeen? What are you doing in a bar?

RICH. This isn't a bar, Romaine. It's a *coffeehouse*. No alcohol here.

DAVID. My parents think I'm spending the night with friends.

KENDAL. And, in a way, you are.

DAVID. And besides, what the heck, it's not a school night or nothin'. It's only Saturday night.

ROMAINE. Oh yeah, you know, it's *really* late. I need to be up early tomorrow.

JEFF. Aw, come on, Romaine. We can stay, can't we? Just for a little while.

ELVIS. You have previous engagements, Romaine?

ROMAINE. Well, not so much *engagements*, as church. (*Harry drops something behind the bar, which shatters loudly.*)

ELVIS. Good grief! Harry, clean that up. David, go help him.

DAVID. Yes, Elvis. (*David goes behind the counter, out of the way.*)

ELVIS. Church, you say?

RAQUEL. Pope John Paul the first- death by myocardial infarction, *according to the Vatican*, but since he only served 33 days as Pope, several conspiracy theories suggest...

ELVIS. Shut up, Raquel. (*to Romaine*) Ah, children. The music they make. You want to protect them, you want to look out for them, and sometimes you want to strangle them and beat their heads into the wall.

ROMAINE. But Raquel's surely not *your* child?

ELVIS. No, of course not, though I do still feel somewhat possessive.

ROMAINE. Possessive?

ELVIS. I mean protective.

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KENDAL. Hey Raquel, “Gregory Salazar”!

RAQUEL. Oh, you know *that* one, don’t you?

KENDAL. I like to hear it.

RAQUEL. Killed by vampires, 1987.

JEFF. Huh?

RICH. What was that piece you read tonight, Elvis?

ELVIS. A little Lord Byron. “So We’ll Go No More a-Roving”. I’m trying to introduce David to the Masters, you know.

ROMAINE. Oh, I *love* Byron.

*“And thou art dead, as young and fair
As aught of mortal birth;
And form so soft, and charms so rare,
Too soon return’d to Earth!
Though Earth receiv’d them in her bed,
And o’er the spot the crowd may tread
In carelessness or mirth,
There is an eye which could not brook
A moment on that grave to look.”*

I recited that at my grandmother’s funeral last month.

RAQUEL. That’s beautiful. George Gordon, Lord Byron: Died of a febrile illness while fighting for Greek indepen...

ELVIS. Shut *up*, Raquel! I’ve never that much cared for Byron, myself. Not to say that he wasn’t a talented poet, but for me, his life overshadows his literary achievements. Getting his sister pregnant, dabbling in bisexuality, drinking from skulls, all of it purely for effect, you know? Much like Oscar Wilde, though with rather shoddier showmanship. Byron’s whole “mad, bad, and dangerous to know” pose wore thin after a while.

ROMAINE. You’re right, it does sort of smack of bad advertising; if one really *were* “Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know” one would hardly need to work so hard at testifying to one’s madness, badness, and... knowledge of danger?

ELVIS. Dangerous knowledge.

ROMAINE. No, that’s not quite it; something more like “Dangerous Intimacy”.

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ELVIS. Oh, *very* nice.

RICH. I'm going to start a band called "Dangerous Intimacy".

KENDAL. Can I be in it?

RICH. Oh Kendal, you're in *all* my imaginary bands.

ELVIS. Though of course, she *was* only his *half*-sister.

KENDAL. Whose?

ELVIS. Lord Byron. The one he got pregnant. (*Suddenly Raquel starts, shouting, spilling her coffee.*)

RAQUEL. SPIDER! It's a Spider!!! (*Harry calmly takes a coffee mug and puts it over the spider, trapping it. Raquel relaxes for a moment.*)

Whew, thanks, Har'. Shit. I spilled my coffee.

ELVIS. Then go to the bathroom and wash up, Raquel.

RAQUEL. Yes sir. Sorry sir. (*Raquel exits, surreptitiously sliding a napkin or something under the mug and taking the spider with her.*)

ROMAINE. Who is Raquel? She's had a little too much caffeine, don't you think?

DAVID. Oh, that's just our Rocky.

JEFF. She works here?

RICH. What makes you say that?

JEFF. Well, she called Elvis "Sir".

ELVIS. Many call me "sir". It's a mark of respect, you see, for those who, in some small way, look up to me. You know. For guidance.

KENDAL. Advice.

RICH. Management.

KENDAL. Control.

RICH. Superintendence.

ELVIS. Who knows, Jeffrey, you might be calling me Sir by the end of the night. You see, I give people very good advice.

JEFF. ...But you very seldom follow it?

ELVIS. What's that, Jeffrey, darling?

JEFF. It's Jeff. "I give myself very good advice, but I very seldom follow it". It's a line from *Alice in Wonderland*.

RICH. I don't remember that line from the book.

KENDAL. No, nor I, neither.

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ROMAINE. Oh, I don't think it's actually in the book- It's one of the songs from the Disney movie.

ELVIS. DISNEY!!! *Oh.* Oh, you see, I don't watch... Disney.

JEFF. What's wrong with Disney?

ELVIS. He always came as a conqueror. But I'm forgetting my manners. Can I get you some coffee? On the house, for the newbies.

ROMAINE. Thank you.

ELVIS. It's not often we see new faces around here. Harry! Two of The House Special coffees for Jeffrey and Romaine.

RICH. Ah, The House Special coffee.

KENDAL. I do love The House Special coffee.

DAVID. Oh, me too! Can I have a cup of the House Special Coffee?

ELVIS. Of course you may, David. Harry?

JEFF. What makes the coffee so special? Does it have nutmeg or something?

ROMAINE. It won't get us all hyper like Raquel, will it?

ELVIS. What? No, Raquel's only drinking decaf. She just drinks far too much of it. The House Special coffee is "special" meaning "secret". As in "Special Intelligence".

ROMAINE. Like British Intelligence? They don't call it "Special Intelligence" anymore. It's MI-6 now.

ELVIS. Ah well, *autre temps, autre mores; n'est-ce pas?*

ROMAINE. French?

ELVIS. *Oui.* Harry *does* use a French Roast for the *Spécialité du Maison Café*, but don't mistake me- I wouldn't call it an International Coffee- there shall certainly be no handsome waiters named Jean-Luc over whom to reminisce. (*Harry comes over with two mismatched coffee mugs and gives them to Romaine and Jeff, who take them. David comes over with him, carrying his own cup of coffee.*) Only Harry, our own resident Goth. Gives the place a bit of atmosphere, don't you think?

HARRY. Your... coffee.

ROMAINE. Thank you.

JEFF. Yeah, thanks. So, what's your problem with Disney? I'm not a Disney Adult or anything, but what's up?

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ELVIS. Oh, I don't like to speak of... *that man*. But, you're new here, Jeffrey; you'll need to be filled in. You see, in his adaptations, Disney always changed the story to be more about *himself* than about the source material. The plucky youngster against the forces of evil. He didn't *serve* the story; he conquered it and made it his own. Sanitized and American.

JEFF. What's wrong with American?

ELVIS. Americans are anti-intellectual. They prefer happy endings to bittersweet ironies; pretty lies over sober truths...

ROMAINE. *I* prefer happy endings; I think that's a *human* quality, not an American one.

ELVIS. But, Romaine, you know and understand that happy endings are not always possible in life.

KENDAL. *Some* people know how to take their medicine.

JEFF. With a spoonful of sugar?

RICH. *Wrong.*

ELVIS. Also, Disney was anti-Semitic; he named names in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee; *and* he was a spy for the FBI, reporting to them about labor union activity.

JEFF. Wow.

ELVIS. Additionally, he was a salt fascist.

ROMAINE. Salt?

ELVIS. Yes. He'd take his employees to lunch and if they salted their food without tasting it first, they'd be fired.

ROMAINE. Well, firing is a little harsh, but it *does* make sense to taste before salting.

JEFF. But what if you'd been to that restaurant before and knew the fries there were always undersalted?

RICH. Precisely! Fascism!

JEFF. Wow. I had no idea.

ELVIS. They say that Disney's body waits, that his grim grinning ghost yearns to stalk the earth again. He is entombed, the story goes, beneath the Sleeping Beauty Castle, in his coffin made of ice. His body waits for a simple kiss to wake and come to life again- but this "sleeping beauty" waits for no prince - he waits for the chill unnatural kiss of *science*. And so, one day far from now, when perhaps we all will have left this plane, in

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a dystopian future when cars can fly and buildings tower over us all, just as he dreamed on our television sets and movie screens, his corpse, this- this frozen *revenant* shall rise from the halls of the dead to reign o'er the feeble cowering mouse people of his magic kingdom! He shall rise again, like... like...

DAVID. Like yeast?

RICH. Like an erection?

ROMAINE. Like Jesus?

ELVIS. I was going to say "like a zombie", but Jesus, *yes*. Jesus is more vampiric. You eat his flesh and drink his blood. Jesus, *yes*. Speaking of beverages: drink, drink! You don't want the coffee to get cold. (*Jeff and Romaine sip their coffee for the first time, and both start, astonished. Jeff does a spit-take*).

JEFF. Whoa! That's the strongest coffee I've ever had! (*He drinks more*)

ROMAINE. It's amazing! I... I can feel my blood pulsing in my head! (*She drinks more*)

JEFF. All the colors are so bright! The world is too wonderful! (*He drinks more*)

ROMAINE. This is like a caffeinated satori! Wait a minute, wait a minute! (*She drains her mug. Then, suddenly picking up speed, like a visionary*) Disney's immortalist aspirations are not that special because *lots* of geniuses have hoped to live forever, like Thomas Edison, who breathed his last into a glass jug which is on display in the Edison Museum in New Jersey, hoping that scientists of the future could revive him from that; even Edison, *yes*, though Edison ripped off Nicola Tesla, who didn't get any credit for electric light, and Marconi ripped off radio from Tesla too- and Tesla died alone and penniless- but! Tesla might have had the last laugh after all, because- because- because- maybe he didn't die at all, but ascended to another plane of existence!

O joy! that in our embers

Is something that doth live,

That nature yet remembers

What was so fugitive!

(*Romaine shivers- the vision is gone- she begins to relax, breathing deeply.*)

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DAVID. Holy crap.

RICH. *(to Kendal)* Wordsworth?

KENDAL. Word. *(Kendal and Rich slap palms. Jeff tosses back the rest of his coffee, then suddenly starts, as the coffee's effects hit him).*

JEFF. I, I... whoa. Wait!

ROMAINE. What is it?

JEFF. *(talking very quickly)* Tesla was anti-semitic, like Disney was, as were Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Lindbergh and Gerald Ford and Roald Dahl; perhaps it's a quality of geniuses that they should be intolerant of everything that doesn't conform to their ideals- OR actually, wait, these are all *Americans*, who, like you said, Elvis, are anti-intellectual, and Jews are often regarded as intellectual, so- *(he begins to falter)* so- so they- wait, wait, geniuses are by nature intellectuals, so why would they... wait- Roald Dahl wasn't American either, was he? I mean, I mean...

(Picking up in a burst of speed)

There once was a man named McGinnit,

Whose soda can had nothing in it;

So he injured his jaw

Nursing air through a straw

A sucker is born every minute!

DAVID. Wordsworth?

KENDAL and RICH. No. *(Kendal and Rich slap palms.)*

JEFF. Damn, I thought I *had* something there.

ELVIS. You certainly had *something*. I believe you meant Henry Ford. *(Raquel enters from the bathroom, and crosses to her barstool.)*

RICH. Gerald Ford was hardly a genius.

RAQUEL. The only president with two failed assassination attempts by women!

ELVIS. Although Chevy Chase's SNL caricature did more to promote the idea of him as a clumsy oaf than was, perhaps, warranted. *(Jeff turns his mug upside down and laps the remainder like a dog.)*

ROMAINE. Wow. What's in this coffee?

JEFF. Yeah, where do you brew it, Bat Country?

ELVIS. Ah-ah-ah! Special Intelligence!

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KENDAL. On the House.

JEFF. Can we have more?

ELVIS. No, not for a little while yet. You don't want to drink too much too soon. Your hearts are already racing; I can feel it from here.

ROMAINE. My heart *is* racing, you're right, but it doesn't feel *bad*. This stuff is incredible. I felt for a moment like I understood the secrets of the universe, you know?

ELVIS. Oh, I *know*. The House Special has that way about it.

DAVID. I didn't even drink mine yet.

ELVIS. Well, go ahead, David. *(David drinks his coffee. He pauses for a moment, shrugs nonchalantly, then suddenly the coffee hits him)*

DAVID. Whoa, whoa! You know how some people love Andrew Lloyd Webber even though Stephen Sondheim is clearly superior? It's like, Sondheim is difficult, so they don't try? They'd rather have the pretty pictures and stuff that Andrew Lloyd Webber provides. And that is like our country! Our political situation is, wait- We don't want to think about annoying things like global warming or recycling, we just want to be comforted and entertained and assume that God will take care of things because, because- and that's why up until recently we've been electing appealingly dumb white trash presidents! Send in the clowns? Don't bother, they're here! *(The coffee wears off)*.

ELVIS. Hmmm. That was a provocative metaphor, David. You see why I love him?

ROMAINE. Indeed.

DAVID. It's weird that Andrew Lloyd Webber and Stephen Sondheim have the same birthday, don't you think? They're both March 22nd. Makes you wonder if there really is something to astrology.

RAQUEL. March 22nd is also William Shatner's birthday. Explain *that*! Ha!

DAVID. Well, it's not an exact science.

KENDAL. But, what is, these days?

JEFF. That's weird. March 22nd is also *my* birthday.

ELVIS. So, then: What do *you* think? A concentrated day of harmonic convergence, resulting in, dare we say, a certain wild genius? Or just coincidence?

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JEFF. What?

ELVIS. Do you feel as if that natal day has conferred upon you some sort of elusive godhead that rests upon your uneasy shoulders?

JEFF. Uh... no, I don't think so... (*in an LOLcats voice*) I can has moar coffee now?

ELVIS. Oh, how can I resist? Of course you may, Jeffrey.

JEFF. Jeff.

ELVIS. Harry! More coffee for Jeff!

RAQUEL. ...Not to mention that Sondheim and Lloyd Webber have the same birthday but they were born across the world *in different time zones*.

ELVIS. Yes, Raquel; I think we've exhausted that topic.

RICH. You know, Romaine was very interested in seeing your books, Elvis.

KENDAL. Yes, we told her about your special editions.

RICH. She's a fan of illuminated bibles.

ROMAINE. Well, bibles in general, but illuminated ones are especially nice.

ELVIS. Certainly, who doesn't like a little illumination? If you'd care to come with me to my study in the back room, Romaine, I can show you my stacks.

ROMAINE. Well, I really shouldn't- I need to get home for...

ELVIS. ...Church tomorrow. Yes, you've mentioned that. May I ask, Romaine, what denomination are you?

ROMAINE. Roman Catholic.

ELVIS. Oh wonderful; I have a question. I've been meaning to get Catholic, but I'm trying to keep my boyish figure these days. How many carbs, would you estimate, are in the Eucharist?

ROMAINE. What?

ELVIS. How many carbs in the Eucharist?

ROMAINE. Well, I don't know... Not many, I would think.

ELVIS. But it *is* a sort of bread, I understand?

ROMAINE. Yes. a sort of cracker—

ELVIS. ...Until it turns into the body of Christ, then it is meat, yes? Flesh.

ROMAINE. Well, not actually.

ELVIS. But isn't that a tenet of your faith? That it is actual?

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JEFF. Satisfactual.

RICH. *(to JEFF) Wrong.*

ELVIS. So technically, in the basest terms, a transubstantiated Host would have fewer carbs than an untransubstantiated?

RICH. “Substantiated”?

ROMAINE. I suppose, but no one really expects...

ELVIS. Oh, so then you don’t *believe*.

ROMAINE. No, I believe in Jesus; I do. I just don’t believe in ridiculous superstition. Only in the facts of the bible. But I do have faith.

ELVIS. Oh, certainly. No one’s disputing that. *(Elvis looks into Romaine’s eyes and hypnotizes her. Perhaps a sound or light cue.)* You would like to see my bible collection, though, wouldn’t you? Tomorrow’s not till tomorrow, after all. You can come with me. You love books.

ROMAINE. Well, tomorrow’s always a day away. I suppose I can come along for a little bit. I do love books.

ELVIS. Come along then. *(Elvis begins to leave, and Romaine follows, enthralled. She looks back for a moment.)*

ROMAINE. Jeff? Aren’t you coming?

JEFF. What, to see a bunch of old dusty books? I don’t *think* so. Err. I’ll just stay out here till you’re done. Don’t mind me. *(Harry arrives with another cup of coffee for Jeff)*

ROMAINE. All right, then. *(Elvis and Romaine exit. Jeff takes the coffee from Harry; he just stands there, expectantly.)*

JEFF. Thank you.

HARRY. *Enjoy.* *(Jeff attempts to drink the coffee and discovers a piece of paper in the cup).*

JEFF. What’s this? A note? *(Kendal, alarmed, begins to walk over to Harry, almost menacingly.)*

KENDAL. Fanmail from some flounder.

DAVID. What’s it say, what’s it say?

JEFF. Well, hold on... *(Rich grabs the note out of Jeff’s hand, and reads it.)*

RICH. La! How silly. Some foolish ghost story about vampires. Harry, you should really be more careful about checking your mugs before you pour coffee in them.

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KENDAL. You *really* should.

RICH. Poor Jeff could have suffered a nasty paper cut.

KENDAL. Nasty. In fact, this is very serious. Come, Harry, let me take you in the kitchen to speak about this.

DAVID. Well, it's not *that* serious. How much could wet paper hurt someone?

RICH. Are you an expert on paper cuts now, David? I thought your forte was musical theatre.

DAVID. I can know other things, can't I? (*Kendal, using surprising strength, strong-arms Harry offstage into the back room*)

RICH. Children are best eaten and not heard.

RAQUEL. Eaten?

RICH. I mean "seen". The real question is: what are you going to be when you grow up. Isn't it?

JEFF. It is?

RICH. Certainly! David, as Elvis' protégé, has a unique opportunity to learn and make something better of himself. Once he reaches a certain age, he'll... well, things will have to change, won't they?

DAVID. Wait, what?

RICH. This idyll can't last forever, David. Once you turn eighteen, you'll have to decide what you want to be. Or, to put it more clearly, your actions now will determine what you become.

RAQUEL. One man's meat is another man's poison.

RICH. One man's fish is another man's *poisson*.

JEFF. But that's true for everyone, isn't it?

RAQUEL. Some people don't get the choice. It's a god-eat-god world.

RICH. Dog-eat-Dog, Raquel.

RAQUEL. Don't be disgusting.

RICH. You're the one who eats spiders!

RAQUEL. But I would never kill a little doggie!

JEFF. Wait, what's going on?

RICH. (*hypnotic*) Oh look, Jeff, your fly has come undone again. You'd best re-pin it.

JEFF. What? (*Jeff reaches to his crotch and pricks his finger on the pin*)
OW!

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RICH. Oh, a prick from your prick. How painful. (*Kendal re-enters*)

KENDAL. Harry's taken care of.

RICH. Excellent. Let's party. (*Kendal and Rich continue hypnotizing Jeff and David, who both fall almost instantly under their spell. Jeff slowly holds out his bloody finger, in a trance. The same light/sound cue as when Romaine was hypnotized*).

KENDAL. Oh, I hate that "party" has become a verb, you know? I despise it when people verb nouns.

RICH. But Kendal, you've just verbed the noun "verb".

KENDAL. I was doing that to make an ironic point. It's like onomatopoeia.

RICH. No it isn't. (*Rich takes Jeff's finger and begins to suck the blood out of it.*)

KENDAL. Certainly it is. Like saying "Anthropomorphism rears its ugly head". With that you're anthropomorphizing anthropomorphism, right? It's like that. (*Kendal unbuttons David's shirt, and bites into his neck, and begins to suck his blood*)

RAQUEL. That's still not onomatopoeia, though. That's just meta. I like anthropomorphism, though. ...Hey, can I have some? Just a little bit? Pleeceeease? (*Rich disengages from Jeff's finger.*)

RICH. Don't whine, Raquel; it's not very attractive. No one will like you if you're petulant. Now, you know Elvis won't let you have any yet.

RAQUEL. I know, I know, I just thought maybe...

RICH. Wrong. (*Kendal disengages from David, who swoons into her arms. She puts his unconscious body in a chair.*)

KENDAL. "A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed / Against the earth's sweet-flowing breast." I can has some Jeff? (*Rich passes Jeff's arm to Kendal, who wipes it off, then begins to suck on the finger.*)

RICH. Kipling, Kendal?

RAQUEL. Kilmer. "I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a tree". Shot in the head during the first world war! (*Kendal turns to Raquel and slaps her across the face.*)

KENDAL. I didn't ask you, bitch! (*Raquel bursts into tears and runs offstage, out the front door.*)

RICH. Was that really necessary?

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KENDAL. What. She's still a *human*.

RICH. You know what would go great with this?

KENDAL. What?

RICH. You. (*Rich puts Jeff's unconscious body down in a chair, and he and Kendal kiss passionately, smearing each other's faces with blood.*)

KENDAL. Oh, Richie, why can't it be like this all the time? Just you and me?

RICH. Soon, babycakes. Soon, this will all be ours. We just have to wait for the right time to strike.

KENDAL. I think Elvis is suspicious.

RICH. Well, he *should* be. I just think it's odd he went for Romaine – Jeff was right up his alley.

KENDAL. He *wishes* Jeff was “up his alley”. He probably figured *you'd* want the girl, so he took her to spite you.

RICH. He's not that much of a bastard, is he?

KENDAL. Ugh, *men*. Say what he will about Disney, you're all conquerors.

RICH. But some of us know who *should* lead. You'll always be my Queen.

KENDAL. But when?

RICH. Soon. Soon he'll be gone, and we'll have the place to ourselves. (*Rich and Kendal kiss again*)

KENDAL. Now, come on- we'd better go wash up, then figure out what the hell Harry's up to. That's another crimp in the plan. (*Blackout. End of scene.*)

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