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The Phlebotomist

A Red-blooded Comedy with Bite

by

Neal Donohue

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The Phlebotomist
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CAST

BELA; Count Dracula, the world renowned vampire of Transylvania.

JOB APPLICANT; Phlebotomy technician, hypnotized and sent home by Bela.

NURSE FENDER; Supervisor of the Sunshine Blood Bank.

BORIS; Bela’s loyal assistant from Transylvania.

NIGHTINGALE; Young nurse assigned to help Bela at the clinic.

DOCTOR PARSAN; New Director of the Sunshine Blood Bank, enamored with Nurse Nightingale.

DONORS; Assorted blood donors, from bankers to winos.
  MR. KATZENZAKIS, a local banker
  ALBERT, a homeless “hobo”
  AN OBNOXIOUS DRUNK
  MRS. SIMPSON, an elderly woman
  FINAL DONOR

DETECTIVE; Police officer investigating the sudden death of Mr. Katzenzakis.

UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATOR: On the case of the death of Mr. Katzenzakis

SETTING

The Sunshine Blood Bank in Los Angeles; the present
ACT I

Scene One

(AT RISE: Two job applicants sit against a wall, awaiting an interview at the Sunshine Blood Bank of Los Angeles for Phlebotomy technician; a medic who draws blood. Above their heads a large clock declares it to be eight. One applicant is dressed casually and appears nervous, while the other is dressed in a formal tuxedo and cape, inspecting his fingernails. His flamboyant appearance draws the attention of the other.)

JOB APPLICANT

Phlebotomist?

BELA

I beg your pardon, are you speaking to me?

JOB APPLICANT

Do you see anyone else in this room? I said, are you a phlebotomist?

BELA

I am from Transylvania.

JOB APPLICANT

What?

BELA

Transylvania! That is small village in Bulgaria. I know not where this phlebotomy is, nor do I care.

JOB APPLICANT

You don’t get it, do you?

BELA

What must I get?

JOB APPLICANT

This is the Sunshine Blood Bank of Hollywood.

BELA

Of course it is! That is why I am here. Why are you here?

JOB APPLICANT

I’m a phlebotomist.
BELA
Who cares? I am Bulgarian.

JOB APPLICANT
Listen to me, carefully. (Slowly) I draw blood for a living.

BELA
(Slower) And so do I. Much longer than you, I can assure you.

(BELA laughs.)

JOB APPLICANT
I certainly believe that, grandpa. But that doesn't mean you'll get this job.

BELA
I am not your grandpa. What job are you applying for, a janitor?

JOB APPLICANT
No, wiseguy. Phlebotomist! I just told you that. Are you deaf? I'm a phlebotomy technician.

BELA
Well, I only want job to draw blood.

JOB APPLICANT
Then you are a phlebotomist?

BELA
And you are idiot! How many times must I say, I am Transylvanian! What is wrong with you? You will never get job as janitor.

JOB APPLICANT
I'm not applying for a job as janitor!

BELA
I would not give you one if you were. You are obviously demented peasant.

JOB APPLICANT
A what? Say, I bet you don't know what a phlebotomist is?

BELA
Must I go through this again? Stop it! I don't care. Leave me alone! Go read comic book.

JOB APPLICANT
I draw blood for a living.
BELA

(Exhilarated) Ah! Why did you not say so? Are you of the living dead? Perhaps you can be my helper. You should apply for job to draw blood.

JOB APPLICANT

I am! Are you cracked in the head, you illegal moron? Don't you know why I'm here?

BELA

This is not my job. If you do not know why you are here, you should go away.

JOB APPLICANT

Are you making a joke?

BELA

I do not make joke. Perhaps your mother has made joke.

JOB APPLICANT

Suppose I punch you in the nose, you sissy?

BELA

Ha! That is most unlikely. I would have to kill you.

JOB APPLICANT

Kill me? You? You're nearly sixty years old.

BELA

Sixty? Ha! You must be imbecile. I am six hundred and thirty-two years old.

JOB APPLICANT

I knew it. You're nuts. Another Hollywood wacko. You don't make any sense. You don't understand a word of English. You're right off the boat.

BELA

I was never on boat. I flew to America from Transylvania, and Transylvania is in Bulgaria. Bulgaria is in Europe. Europe is one of five continents on planet called Earth. Earth is third planet from sun and sun is center of solar system. Your science class is over. Now, go away and play with yourself before your mother comes home. But leave me alone, you jackass!

JOB APPLICANT

You got some nerve. Are you calling me stupid?

BELA

I call you jackass. You are deaf, as well. Go away! Shoo! Shoo!

JOB APPLICANT

Listen to me, you old geezer. Don't talk to me anymore. That's a warning.
BELA

(Laughs) That is no warning. That is great relief. Thank you, Mr. Pumpkin head.

(BELLA and JOB APPLICANT sit silent for a long period.)

BELA

(Glares back) I have decided to forgive you. My name is Bela. (Cheerfully) You must be demented peasant, no? We have many like you in Transylvania. You must understand, in Transylvania gentlemen do not talk to peasants, unless we first make love to their wife. My name is Bela. Let us be friends.

JOB APPLICANT

My name is Jack. All I asked was if you draw blood for a living.

BELA

(Laughs) You may say I draw blood for a living, or you may say I live to draw blood.

JOB APPLICANT

Sure, it’s a job, nothing else. I know. I’ve been waiting here more than an hour. My house cat must be ripping the couch to shreds by now. Nice cape you got. You must have another job here in Hollywood? Are you an actor?

BELA

Actor? No.

JOB APPLICANT

Why this cape? Are you gay?

BELA

(Somber) Sometimes, but not tonight.

APPLICANT

(Baffled) Not tonight?

BELA

No, tonight I am serious. I must get job. And this is how Transylvanian gentlemen dress. Are you gay tonight?

JOB APPLICANT

I’m married! See this ring?

BELA

Ah, gold? I have medallion with gold, also, but much more. You see? Come close to my neck and take a look.
JOB APPLICANT
No thanks. I don’t do that kind of stuff. I know it’s Hollywood, but I’m a phlebotomist, that’s all. By the way, Bela, I’m fresh blood. I’ll get this job, easy.

BELA
Fresh blood? Very good! You must look into my eyes.

JOB APPLICANT
Say, I told you I don’t do that kind of stuff.

BELA
You must do as I say.

APPLICANT
The hell I do! I do what I want. What I want...what I...I....

BELA
(Waving his hand) You are under my spell. Do as I command you!

JOB APPLICANT
(Hypnotized) I am under your spell—hey, go to hell!

BELA
I probably will, but right now I am your master. Repeat after me, “Bela, you are my master.”

JOB APPLICANT
Yes. Bela, you are my master...you are my master.

BELA
Repeat, “I must go home now to drown my cat.”

JOB APPLICANT
I must go home now to drown my...What?

BELA
Just repeat after me, you pigeon-brained peasant, “I must go home now to drown my cat.”

JOB APPLICANT
Yes, master...I must go home now to drown my cat.

BELA
Good. Now, go home, Jack, and drown your cat. I need job more than you do.

JOB APPLICANT
Yes, master. (Rising) Excuse me, but I have to go home now to drown my cat. Good luck with your new job, Bela.
BELA
Yes, thank you very much, Jack. Now, shoo!

(In a trance JACK rises and shuffles out of the interview room. NURSE FENDER, the head nurse at the blood bank, strolls in and looks around alarmed.)

NURSE FENDER
My word! Is there nobody else here, except you?

(BELLA looks around and shrugs. NURSE FENDER sits at her desk, shuffles papers, then stares back at BELA before introducing herself.

NURSE FENDER
Good Evening, sir. I'm nurse Edith Fender. I'm the personnel manager of the Sunshine Blood Bank of Hollywood. I'm in charge of hiring. Are you sure nobody else showed up, tonight?

BELA
None that I have seen. Perhaps it is early.

NURSE FENDER
That's strange, it's past eight o'clock. Well, it's actually getting late, so let’s get started. Come and sit down over here, sir. Let me take a look at your resumé, Mister...Mister...?

(BELA walks to her table and with a grand flourish of his cape; he sits.)

BELA
Draculoski! My Bulgarian name is Bela Vladimir Ziebrinenski Draculoski. I am visitor from Transylvania.

NURSE FENDER
That’s quite a name you got? Mind if I call you Bela?

BELA
For someone as lovely as you, you may call me whatever your heart desires.

NURSE FENDER
(Flattered) Oh, my! How charming! So, you're visiting Los Angeles? Well, don't worry. We’re an equal opportunity employer. You may call me Edith.

BELA
Yes, and you may call me, 'sir'. My, what a commanding figure you are, Edith. I am overwhelmed by your beauty...your size, your face, your roundness. You are a mountain flower of beauty. What wondrous, strong, hands you have. Have you milked many cows?
NURSE FENDER
Well, no—what did you say? Have I milked many cows? Just what the hell does that mean? Please be civil, while I look at your resume.

BELA
Your wish is my command.

NURSE FENDER
It says you’re originally from Transylvania. Never heard of it.

BELA
I would not think so.

NURSE FENDER
Your resume states you’re certified to draw blood in Bulgaria. How many years have you been doing this type of work?

BELA
A very long time. Three, four, maybe five hundred years.

NURSE FENDER
I see. Well, that's nice. Then we can...what? Did you say five hundred years?

BELA
(Forces laugh) Days! I mean days. My English is not so good. About five hundred days, or about two human years.

NURSE FENDER
Human years? Well, two years does qualify you, and even if your English isn’t good you won’t be talking much with the public--I hope. You’ll do fine. Since this is the last day of interviews

(NURSE FENDER drops pen and cuts her finger while picking it up.)

NURSE FENDER
Ouch, a paper cut! Wow, that stings.

(She squeezes her bleeding finger. BELA’s eyes light up, his nostrils expand, his breathing quickens as he feverishly leans over her desk to touch her.)

NURSE FENDER
Don’t you hate paper cuts? Look at all this blood.

BELA
No, not at all. I love blood. May I touch your finger?
NURSE FENDER
Huh? No! Did you say you love blood?

BELA
*(Fighting urge to suck the blood)* No, I love looking at you. *(Stands)* Anyway, you have resume. You know what I mean. If you hire me, I can be of great service to you, and your bloody bank. I work hard, never late, never miss work in hundred years, and I welcome response for this blood sucking job. Will that be all, Madame Edith?

NURSE FENDER
We prefer to call it phlebotomy technician. And again, just call me Edith. We’ll be in touch, but confidentially I can see no problem with you, Bela. You can have the job if you want it... *(Whispers)* ...and anything else available. *(Giggles)* Oh yes, one other thing. This is minimum-wage and it’s a graveyard shift, eight to four in the morning. Will that be a problem for you and your family?

BELA
*(laughs)* You are most funny. That is reason I chose it. This is most marvelous.

NURSE FENDER
No, Bela. I’m not trying to be funny. I’m serious. Will these hours be a problem for your wife?

BELA
*(Affects a serious frown)* Oh? Yes, we are being serious. Do not worry, Nurse Fender. I tell my wives, tonight. Now, I shall leave. Will that be all?

NURSE FENDER
What do you mean, wives?

BELA
Wife! My English is not so….

NURSE FENDER
I know, we’ve been through this already. Well, you start Friday night.

BELA
Yes, I will arrive after sundown. I say once more to you, my lovely employer, good evening and farewell. Until we meet again, adieu.

NURSE FENDER
Good night. But not sundown, Bela—it’s eight in the evening.

BELA
Yes, I understand. Now, I must go, I say! And once again I bid you adieu, my delightful princess. *(Rises, flaps cape, passes a hall mirror and thinks he sees his reflection)* Yikes!
NURSE FENDER
What’s the matter?

BELA
(Laughs) Your mirror must be dirty; I thought I saw my reflection.

(BELLA exits.)

NURSE FENDER
Why do I always get all the screwballs?

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT I

Scene Two

(AT RISE: The following evening. BELLA has arrived at the blood bank in full formal dress ready to begin his new job as Phlebotomist.)

NURSE FENDER
Good evening, Mr. Fancy-pants. It’s work time. Put away your exotic cape. Looks like you’ve been partying on the wrong side of town. This is just a blood bank on skid row, no need to get formal. Sit the client down, strap his bicep, draw a pint, thank him with a thirty dollar check, then push him out the back door. They only want money for a bottle of wine, anyway. Got that?

BELA
(Indignant) My name is not Fancy-pants. It is Bela. Where is rope?

NURSE FENDER
What rope? Why do you need a rope?

BELA
To tie victim down.

NURSE FENDER
Very funny! They may be winos, but we treat them with respect and dignity. We don’t tie people down at this blood-bank, and we don't call them victims. We use the armrest, jab’em, draw a pint, stick a label on the bag, then kiss’em goodnight. Have you got that?

BELA
(Looking at his pants) I will not kiss them good night. That is not my job, and these are not my fancy pants. Do you wish me to wear my fancy pants? I do have beautiful Perestroika dance wear. It is only used for Halloween celebrations. My father gave me his last pair before wretched peasants bury him alive in graveyard. Would you like to hear story? It is very sad.
NURSE FENDER
No—God, no! I don’t want to listen to this, anymore. I have a hangover and a lot of paperwork to do. Just keep it simple. *(Outside door opens)* I hear someone. *(Opens door)* I’ll sign him in. Good luck, Bela.

BELA
*(Flourishes cape)* And good luck to you, my fellow blood-sucker!

NURSE FENDER
*(To herself as exits)* What can you expect for minimum-wage?

*(BELA arranges needles, test-tubes, and labels as a clean, well-dressed GENTLEMAN enters.)*

BANKER
How do you do? *(Laughing)* You must be the chief vampire?

BELA
*(Shocked)* What? Who tell you this? This is lie. I am not vampire.

BANKER
Hey, I was joking. Ease up pal, I was just pulling your leg.

BELA
You may not pull my leg—we have not been introduced. I am your blood-banker. Now, sit down, give me blood, and keep quiet!

BANKER
You don’t sound American to me. You must be new. My name is Charles Kazantzakis. I donate blood every month. I’m the president of Harbinger Bank. I’m right there on that street corner. Is this the first time you’ve drawn blood?

BELA
Kazantzakis is Greek name, no?

BANKER
Why, yes it is. Are you Greek?

BELA
No, I am from Bulgaria. Bulgarians suffer many centuries from Greek barbarians who massacred, tortured, and raped our women.

BANKER
Well, yes, that's unfortunate—the old world, religious wars and stuff. It's all very tragic. But we're all Americans, now.

BELA
Not me.
BANKER
Immigrant? I'm sure you will be an American someday.

BELA
I do not wish to be American.

BANKER
Tell me friend, have you been doing this long? What's your name?

BELA
I am not your friend. My title is Count Bela Vladimir Ziebreninski Draculoski. I have drawn blood before your Greek mother entertained villagers in her barn. Now, let me show you how I treat barbarians.

(BELLA quickly straps BANKER's arms to chair with ropes.)

BANKER
Hey, take it easy pal! I'm not going to run away.

BELA
(Laughs) I make sure you don't. Boris, come out! Tie up this Greek butcher.

(A large stern MAN slowly shuffles from the closet.)

BORIS
Yes, master.

BANKER
What's going on here? Who is that guy? What are you two morons doing? I can't move my arms!

BELA
You be silent.

BANKER
I will not be silent. Untie my arms, right now. I'm going home.

BELA
(Laughs) You may not go home. I am going to take your blood--all of it!

BANKER
What the hell are you talking about? Let me out of here, you illegal bastard. Help! Office manager, get in here! Somebody help me!

BELA
Shut up, you Greek scum! Office manager go home. Nobody is here besides me and my slave, Boris. You are now under my spell.
BANKER
The hell I am! Mother of mercy, what’s gotten into you people?

BELA
Boris, this Greek pig needs anesthetic.

(BORIS hits BANKER over the head with black-jack, knocking him out. BELA shuts front door, returns to client, and slowly lowers his head over the banker’s neck while throwing cape over his victim. BLACKOUT.)

ACT I

Scene Three

(AT RISE: The next evening. The BANKER’s body has been discovered in the alley outside the blood-bank and a POLICE DETECTIVE is in the process of interviewing NURSE FENDER and BELA.)

DETECTIVE
(Interviewing with pad and pen) Okay, Edith, let's go over this one more time. What exactly happened? You say you went home at eight, before Mr. Kazantzakis left. He was found in the alley right outside your blood-bank. The autopsy says there was no blood found in his corpse. Yet, you claim you don’t have any record of a blood donation?

NURSE FENDER
Bela, did you draw any blood from Mr. Kazantzakis?

BELA
Absolutely not. Obviously, this hobo drop dead. Must be sick before he got here. This is desperate neighborhood. We deal with desperate people, desperately looking for desperate money. They only give blood for bottle of wine. Is that not so, Nurse Fender?

NURSE FENDER
(Forces laugh) Of course not. Who told you that? Bela has such a hard time with English.

BELA
But you tell me this, yourself.

NURSE FENDER
No, no, no, no! That is absolutely ridiculous. But, yes, some donors are desperate to begin with, and shock sometimes can kill them. This is not uncommon. There’s nothing we can do.
DETECTIVE
Mr. Kazantzakis was a banker and a stock broker. He had a family, a house in suburbia, and ran a business. He was on the Chamber of Commerce. Are you saying he needed thirty bucks for a bottle of wine?

BELA
Maybe he gamble, who knows? He look like gambler to me.

DETECTIVE
How can someone look like a gambler? You sound suspicious to me.

BELA
(Affecting sobs) Me? How dare you! Do you know who I am? Okay, I confess, I confess. I am most grieved by this tragedy. It is all my fault. I kill him! I kill him!

DETECTIVE
Ah, ha! Now we’re getting somewhere. So, tell me, Mr. Draculoski, what exactly did you do?

BELA
(Sobbing) Nothing! I did absolutely nothing, and it kill him! I should have listened to desperate pleas. He want to sell blood, but smell of alcohol was too repulsive. I threw him into street. Oh, forgive me! I should have given him some bread to eat.

DETECTIVE
Alcohol? The autopsy didn’t show a drop of alcohol in his system.

BELA
It could have been mouth-wash.

DETECTIVE
This sounds crazy. I don’t have time for this. Something is fishy. All I can say Edith, you’d better run a squeaky clean operation from here on in, or I’ll close this blood-bank down faster than you can say, “Count Dracula”.

BELA
How dare you! You may not say such name! Who give permission to use my...my... (Smiles) I mean, who told you such silly name?

DETECTIVE
Who told me what silly name?

NURSE FENDER
Don’t pay attention to Bela. He’s an immigrant from Bulgaria and has difficulty with English.

DETECTIVE
(Disgusted) I’m out of here. But just remember, Edith, you’ve been warned. (Exits)
NURSE FENDER
Well, that was close. The chief of police could have shut us down, Bela.

BELA
(Shrugs) Ha! He is nothing but small potato. We have ways to fix police in Transylvania.

NURSE FENDER
This is not Transylvania! Bela, you do as I say, or you’re fired. Do you understand me? I’m giving you an assistant to help you from now on, a nurse who arrived today by the name of Nightingale.

BELA
I need no such bird.

NURSE FENDER
You need to shut up, before we end up in jail.

BELA
(Examining his fingernails) If you insist.

NURSE FENDER
I don’t insist, damn it! I’m giving you an order, you jerk—and stop coming to work in that crazy cape of yours. I don’t care what you do in your private life. If I see you with that flaming outfit again, I’ll fire you.

BELA
When will this Nightingale be here?

NURSE FENDER
She’s here already. Listen to her and we’ll get through this mess.

BELA
You Americans are such children.

NURSE FENDER
Not another word out of you!

(LIGHTS FADE OUT.)
ACT I

Scene Four

(AT RISE: The next evening.)

NIGHTINGALE

(Scurrying around the clinic) Oh my, how disorderly! Why is this place such a mess? It’s no
wonder they hired me on the spot. Bela, you really must sanitize your instruments, and please
put them in order. We can’t put our syringe in the pencil holder. It’s unsanitary. And it
wouldn’t hurt to put some flowers in here with paintings on the wall. It makes the customers
feel at ease, and a couple of mirrors. I’ll bring them in.

BELA

No! We must have no mirrors.

NIGHTINGALE

Don’t be silly, Bela. We need to spruce up our office. This place is so depressing, it looks
like a morgue.

BELA

Ah, so what is wrong with morgue? I say, no mirrors!

Why not?

NIGHTINGALE

It is bad luck in Transylvania.

BELA

This is America.

NIGHTINGALE

That is bad luck, too. (Softly) Ah, my delicate little Nightingale. My little song bird. What
an apt description for such a beautiful woman. You must understand, if I should see your
lovely image in a mirror as I work, I could not concentrate. I would be captivated by the
delicate charm of your soft flowing blonde hair, your sparkling blue eyes, your enchanting
smile. It would cast a hypnotic spell over me. I would be as one wounded by the arrows of
love, as helpless as a wounded bat.

NIGHTINGALE

Oh, how sweet!—wait…a wounded bat? Yuck! Did you say, ’...a wounded bat’?

BELA

No—I say a ‘cat.’
NIGHTINGALE
You said bat!

BELA
I say cat. My English is…

NIGHTINGALE
I know, I know. Your English is not so good. They told me all about your excuse.

BELA
But this is no excuse. Now, now, my precious little turtledove, why should we squabble when we may begin to work as one?

NIGHTINGALE
Perhaps we really don’t need mirrors—but we must have flowers!

BELA
Yes, of course, my delicate rose petal. I so adore flowers, but what flower could ever match your divine beauty.

NIGHTINGALE
(Giggles) Let's not forget our work, Bela. Our clients are waiting for us in the hallway, and we really should get started. Don’t you think?

(NIGHTINGALE opens hall closet and sees BORIS standing there, arms folded, sternly staring down at her. She slams door, speechless, then fearfully whispers to BELA.)

NIGHTINGALE
There’s a terribly large man standing inside our closet.

BELA
You mean Boris?

NIGHTINGALE
Boris? You know him? Why is Boris standing inside a dark closet?

BELA
He's my assistant.

NIGHTINGALE
But I’m your assistant.

BELA
Of course, but he will assist you when you assist me. (Aside) Boris, you come out. We must work, now.
BORIS

(Rattles closet) Yes, Master.

NIGHTINGALE

Did he just call you, master?

BELA

Yes. It is Bulgarian tradition. We talk with respect in old country. Boris, come out, I say!

BORIS

(Shouts) May I open door, master?

BELA

Yes, you may, Boris.

BORIS

(Steps out) Thank you, Master.

NIGHTINGALE

I’ve never heard anybody talk like that. He gives me the creeps

BELA

Well, Boris is creep. In Transylvania we have many creeps.

NIGHTINGALE

Transylvania? Where the heck is that? Oh my, this is so exciting! Do I look nervous? My hands are trembling. Let’s me see who’s outside in the waiting room. (Peeks out through the door but shuts it quickly) Oh, we have a client. My first one! I’ll go and bring him in.

BELA

Yes, do that my butterfly. (NIGHTINGALE exits; BELA turns sternly to BORIS.) Boris, you must be careful, tonight. Do not frighten our little song bird. Do everything Miss Nightingale tells you to do. Do you understand?

BORIS

Yes, Master.

BELA

And do not call me master, any longer.

BORIS

Yes, Master.

(ALBERT, a “hobo” enters in soiled clothes, escorted by NIGHTINGALE.)
NIGHTINGALE
Come right in, Albert. Sit down and make yourself comfortable. Bela will set you up, and have you ready to go in a jiffy.

ALBERT
(Belches) Okay, but where's da' check youse’ promise me, so’z I’ze can gets some food and stuff?

NIGHTINGALE
Just talk to our phlebotomy technician, Mr. Bela. I’ll finish your paperwork and be right outside. Bye! (Exits)

BELA
Food n’ stuff? Ha! You filthy little tramp, you mean another bottle of wine, don’t you? You get money when we get blood. Now sit down, shut up, and give me both arms.

(BELA and BORIS strap ALBERT down; he grows alarmed.)

ALBERT
What's youse’ two doin’ ta' me? Why's ya' strappen' my head to this chair?

BELA
You keep quiet. If you want free money you do as I command...this is America! Boris strap him tight! We need all his blood.

ALBERT
Ya’z needs' awlz my blood! Are ya' shure? I’ze never heard no one taken’ awlz my's blood, before. I don’t think I likes' this. Maybe I’ze change my mind. Yoose’ just unstraps me, right now.

BELA
Change your mind? Ha! What mind, you drunkin’ little peasant! Boris, strap down his legs!

(BORIS straps his legs.)

ALBERT
(Wrestles hopelessly against ropes) Whoa! Whys’ ya’ strappin’ down my's legs?

BORIS
He is ready, Master.

BELA
Go see what our Miss Nightingale is doing?

BORIS
(Opens door to the front office) Miss Nightingale is busy talking to client in waiting room.
Good! Lock door!

(BELA spreads his cape over ALBERT and lowers himself onto his neck. BORIS watches and giggles. LIGHTS FLICKER. Finishing, BELA wipes bloodied mouth and sits calmly down at table, as ALBERT slumps over dead.)

BELA

Boris, take Mr. Albert to alley.

BORIS

Do I put Mr. Albert into garbage can, Master?

BELA

No, Boris, just drop down sewer. We do not want trouble from meddling police chief, again.

BORIS

Yes, Master.

BELA

And stop calling me master. This is America.

BORIS

Yes, Master.

(BORIS drags ALBERT out back door. NIGHTINGALE enters with check in hand.)

NIGHTINGALE

Did we finish so quickly? Where’s Albert?

BORIS

He ran out back.

NIGHTINGALE

But he forgot his check.

BELA

Oh, what a shame.

NURSE FENDER

(Looking in) I got another live one for you Mr. Fancy pants.
BELA

(As NURSE FENDER exits) Again, with my fancy pants? I tell you these are not my fancy pants.

BORIS

(Returns) Do you wish for me to stand in closet?

NIGHTINGALE

Closet? Why must Boris stand inside a closet?

BELA

(Casually) He like closet. Boris is shy.

(Horrified, NIGHTINGALE turns away, goes out, and brings in next DONOR.)

DONOR

Whoa, baby! Lookey, lookey, lookey! I'ze just found me a sweet little cookie. Hey there, mama, come to papa. If you come with every pint of blood, you can have it all, baby.

(Belches)

BELA

We can have it all, whether you want to give it, or not. This is your turn, Nurse Nightingale. Why not take care of this gentleman.

NIGHTINGALE

Me? But he's frightfully drunk.

NEW DONOR

Com'on now, moma, take care of papa! You got my heart. Now, take my blood. I’m just a fool for love.

NIGHTINGALE

Your breath wreaks of alcohol.

NEW DONOR

Give me a kiss and I’ll ferment your lips.

NIGHTINGALE

(Exiting) He’s all yours.

BELA

Allow me, Mr. Lover-boy? (Jabs DONOR)

NEW DONOR

Ye-ow! Holy cow! I’ve been stabbed.
BELA
Do you have pain? Perhaps, you need sedative? Boris, Mr. Lover-boy needs sleep!

*(BORIS hits DONOR over the head with his blackjack.)*

NEW DONOR
Ye-ow! My head! *(Faints)*

BELA
*(Calls out to lobby)* Miss Nightingale, we shall return after lunch. Mr. Lover-boy has calmed down and is ready for you. You may remove blood

NIGHTINGALE
*(Enters)* Why is he unconscious?

BORIS
He fall asleep.

*(BORIS and BELA exit out door. After withdrawing his blood, Nurse NIGHTINGALE unties the DONOR who stumbles towards door.)*

NEW DONOR
You people are animals! Gives me my check. You should all be ashamed of yourselves. I'ze never coming back.

*(DONOR stumbles out. NIGHTINGALE sits in despair and calls her mother on phone.)*

NIGHTINGALE
Hello mother, it's Florence. I'm so depressed. I work with the strangest people I've ever known. My boss is from Bulgaria and he's driving me nuts. He mistreats all the donors and his assistant lives inside our closet. Tonight, I saw them strapping a client into a chair and beating him over the head with a blackjack. *(Pause)* Well, yes, he was drunk—but clobbering a defenseless hobo over the head was out of line, to say the least. *(Pause)* Huh? You did that to father when he was drunk? Oh, my! You never told me. Well, two more weeks is all I'm giving this place. *(Pause)* Yes, mom, I love you, too. Bye!

NURSE FENDER
*(Enters)* That last donor left in quite a huff. What's happening in here?

NIGHTINGALE
This job is awful.

NURSE FENDER
I know. Most sensible people want to keep their blood. But I meant with our Bulgarian meatball, Bela.
NIGHTINGALE
Oh, Bela? Well, he's certainly a very polite man.

NURSE FENDER
Really? Don't let that fool you. He knows how to turn a woman on, believe me. (Sighs) But are you okay, hon? You don’t look so well.

NIGHTINGALE
Why must you have three people doing such a simple job?

NURSE FENDER
I don’t. Who’s the third?

NIGHTINGALE
Boris, the man who sleeps inside the closet.

NURSE FENDER
What? There's no Boris on our payroll. Did you say he sleeps inside our closet? (Peers into her eyes) Have you been drinking?

NIGHTINGALE
No! Boris is Bela’s assistant—or rather he's my assistant, when I'm assisting Bela. Right now, they're both out to lunch.

NURSE FENDER
You can say that again. I’m going to run across the street and grab a bite to eat. Listen for the door. And when I get back, I want to meet this Boris fellow.

Okay.

(NIGHTINGALE pulls out a bag and pours out the contents. It is her “lunch.” She begins to slowly eat until she hears someone knocking at the door.)

NIGHTINGALE
Come in.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Hello? (Entering) Is this the Sunshine Blood Bank?

NIGHTINGALE
(Not facing him) Yes it is, but everybody's out to lunch...so to speak. Please remain in the waiting room until I come to get you.

DOCTOR PARSAN
But I don’t want to give blood.
NIGHTINGALE
I can’t blame you. Nobody does—not after we're through with them. But you have to wait outside just the same.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Who’s in charge?

NIGHTINGALE
Who knows? Do you want to be in charge? (Begins sobbing)

DOCTOR PARSAN
Yes, actually. I don’t think you understand, young lady. I’m the new director of the Sunshine Blood Bank. You seem to be a bit upset. Did you have a rough night?

NIGHTINGALE
Rough night? No, not if you compare it to World War II. This is the worst day of my life! I’m not working here any longer. There's no point talking to me about it. I'm not changing my mind.

DOCTOR PARSAN
That’s a shame. I was hoping to work with someone as—someone like you.

NIGHTINGALE
Well, you’re out of luck. We don’t hire normal people here. (Finally turns towards DOCTOR who is exceptionally good looking) Oh, my! Work with me?

DOCTOR PARSAN
Why, yes. I’m the new director. Allow me to introduce myself, I am Doctor Parsan.

NIGHTINGALE
Oh! How do you do?

DOCTOR PARSAN
Fine and you're Miss…?

NIGHTINGALE
Nightingale! I’m Florence Nightingale. I’m just fine. You're such a handsome—I mean an interesting director. How delightful to meet you.

DOCTOR PARSAN
But I thought you said you weren’t feeling well.

NIGHTINGALE
(Forces laugh) Don’t be silly. I was only joking. I’m always joking. It keeps the donors upbeat. So, Doctor Parsan, what causes you to drop by our blood bank so late at night?
DOCTOR PARSON
Well, I begin work in the morning but I wanted to meet my night staff. And there doesn’t seem to be anyone in the front office. You’re the first person I’ve met so far.

NIGHTINGALE
Really? You can count on me. I’ll make sure the night staff will be prepared for you by tomorrow.

DOCTOR PARSON
So, you’re not quitting?

NIGHTINGALE
Quitting? Don’t be silly. I thought I told you, I’m a joker!

DOCTOR PARSON
Well, that’s wonderful. I’m so glad you are staying. I’ll look forward to working with you and getting to know you... your staff... Miss Nightingale.

NIGHTINGALE
Oh, you can count on me. I'll have our crew ship-shape and at attention tomorrow. Good night!

DOCTOR PARSON
Good night!

(DOCTOR PARSON exits. BELA and BORIS enter through back door, filthy and bedraggled.)

BELA
Miss Nightingale, my pretty flower, we need new gowns.

NIGHTINGALE
Oh, my! What were you doing?

BORIS
We bury Albert in church graveyard.

NIGHTINGALE
You what?

BELA
(Forces laugh) That was most excellent joke, Boris! But be sensitive to our delicate nurse. She does not understand Bulgarian humor.

NIGHTINGALE
That was a joke? That’s a joke! Listen, you two. We have a new director – Dr. Parson – and we don’t have time for this nutty behavior. I’m taking charge of this clinic right now, until Dr. Parsan is satisfied. Do you fruitcakes understand me?
BELA
Well, I can make him think you are in charge. Boris, from now on Miss Nightingale must look like she’s in charge. I command you to obey her.

BORIS
Yes, Master.

NIGHTINGALE
‘Command’? ‘Master’? What's wrong with you two?

(To Nightingale) Are you new master?

NIGHTINGALE
(Screams) Yahhhhh! No! Don’t call me, or anybody else, master.

Obey, Boris!

BORIS
Yes....

Do not say!

BELA

Yes....

BORIS

Boris! Go into closet, and close door.

(BORIS shuffles into closet and shuts door. BELA locks him in with key. NIGHTINGALE slumps on stool and starts to cry.)

BELA
Now, now, my sweet butterfly! My delicate lily, why are you so sad?

NIGHTINGALE
(Shouting) Because you two are nuts!

BELA
This is not proper way to speak to boss. But I forgive you.

NIGHTINGALE
Listen Bela, Dr. Parsan will visit tomorrow and I told him I’m in charge, and that you and Boris are my helpers. Please cooperate!
BELA
You want I should pretend to be slave? Okay, this I will do.

NIGHTINGALE
Not slave, you will be my helper. Don’t say slave or master, and don’t lock Boris in the closet anymore. I want this blood-bank to appear normal.

BELA
This was normal before you come here. But I can do what you want for short time. Boris, did you hear what we shall do?

BORIS
(From inside closet) Yes, Master.

NIGHTINGALE
(Sobbing) Oh, I’m feeling sick! I’m calling mother!

BELA
You love your mother? That is good. So do I. Do you know my mother was queen of Transylvanian werewolves?

NIGHTINGALE
A queen of werewolves? Why, of course, how silly of me. I should have known.

(NIGHTINGALE sobs uncontrollably as LIGHTS FADE OUT.)

ACT I
Scene Five

(AT RISE: The following evening. DOCTOR PARSAN addresses NURSE FENDER, NIGHTINGALE and BELA.)

DOCTOR PARSAN
Good evening everybody—and a special hello to you Miss Nightingale. It’s very nice to see you, again. You’re looking especially lovely this evening.

NIGHTINGALE
(Enchanted) Good evening, Doctor Parsan. (In “charge”) Now, listen up, we have the new director of our Sunshine Blood Bank here, Dr. Parsan.
DOCTOR PARSAN
Ah, yes, My name is Doctor David Parsan and I’m the new director of our clinic. It’s so nice to get to know my night staff. I want to say I look forward to working with you for a long time to come, and tonight I am here to see how efficiently Miss Nightingale runs our clinic, so I can learn how you are doing and what your needs are. I’m here only to watch. I assure you, I will not interfere.

NIGHTINGALE
Oh, Doctor Parsan, you may interfere if you want. I don’t mind. I really don’t. (Giggles)

BELA
(Sarcastically) Oh? So, you don’t mind? How sweet of you, my dear.

NIGHTINGALE
(Aside) Stop it, Bela.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Ah, so you must be Bela, Miss Nightingale’s helper, that Greek immigrant. What’s your name, old boy?

BELA
I am not Greek! I am Bulgarian. And I am not your old boy!

DOCTOR PARSAN
That was simply an expression. I’m Doctor Parsan. How do you do?

BELA

DOCTOR PARSAN
What assistant?

NIGHTINGALE
(Quickly) Boris! I assigned our phlebotomist, Bela, a new assistant. His name is Boris. He helps us calm down all our donors.

BELA
And remove them after we take blood.

DOCTOR PARSAN
What?

NIGHTINGALE
Remove the blood donation is what he means. Bela is from Bulgaria, also. His…

BELA and NIGHTINGALE, Together
...English is not so good!
DOCTOR PARSAN
Well, that’s just super! *(Looks into the front office waiting room)* Hey, looks as if we have a few donors outside. Bela, perhaps you’d like to do the honors of bringing one in for Miss Nightingale, so we can get started tonight.

NIGHTINGALE
Oh, no! I’ll bring one in.

BELA
*(Sarcastically)* Don’t worry, this I can do. After all, I am just Bulgarian assistant.

NIGHTINGALE
No! I won’t hear of it. You just stay put, Bela. I’ll take care of it for you. *(Exits)*

NURSE FENDER
*(Looks at BELA then at DOCTOR PARSAN)* I’ll help Nurse Nightingale with the registration and then take my leave. *(Exits)*

DOCTOR PARSAN
*(Strolls around and observes.)* Very clean facility, quite attractive. Though it could use a mirror or two. I’ll have a few sent down tomorrow.

BELA.
You do no such thing. We never use mirror.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Nonsense. Brightens up a place. Besides, that will be Miss Nightingale’s decision.

BELA.
She does not make such decision.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Now hear this, Bela, I only allow my facilitator to make final decisions, here—Miss Nightingale. Do we understand each other?

BELA
We understand each other, but we do not agree.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Good, so we’re on the same page.

BELA.
I am not on any page.

DOCTOR PARSAN
What? Not again! That’s simply an expression. It means we both agree.
BELA
Why don’t Americans say what they mean? How does anyone understand you?

DOCTOR PARSAN
Well, I just told you, '...we agree'.

BELA.
And I just told you; we do not agree!

DOCTOR PARSAN
Now, listen here, this impertinence has gone just about far enough. I will not tolerate any more insubordination.

(BORIS rattles the closet door.)

DOCTOR PARSAN
What’s inside that closet?

BELA
What closet?

DOCTOR PARSAN
That closet, right there! There’s only one closet, here.

BELA
Oh, that closet. It is my assistant locked inside.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Your assistant? Is there a person locked in there?

(BORIS rattles the door all the more.)

BELA.
No person. It is only Boris. He want to come out, but I lock his door.

BORIS
Master, let me out!

BELA.
Not now, Boris. I am busy talking.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Why is there a man locked in that closet?

BELA
Boris is not man, he is creep. But he lives in closet.
DOCTOR PARSAN
He lives in a closet? That's crazy. Get him out, immediately.

BELA
(Unlocks door) Come out Boris, and say hello to new director, Doctor Tarzan.

DOCTOR PARSAN
My name is Parsan, not Tarzan!

BORIS
Good evening, Director. Do you have a body?

DOCTOR PARSAN
A body? Why would I have a body? What does he mean, do I have a body? Why is he living in our closet? Who the hell hired this guy? Who the hell hired you? What the hell is going on in my clinic?

NIGHTINGALE
(Enters with elderly lady; surprised to see BORIS) Well, Boris, I wasn’t expecting you to show yourself tonight. (To DOCTOR PARSAN) Boris helps at night sometimes and he loves to play hide-n-seek… don’t you, Boris? (To OLD WOMAN) You just sit down, Mrs. Simpson and make yourself at home, this won’t hurt a bit. It’s quick, painless, and we’re all one big family here.

OLD WOMAN
You know, I’ve never given blood before. I’m a bit afraid.

BORIS
I help you.

DOCTOR PARSAN
(Pushes BORIS back) The hell you will!

BORIS
It is my job. Stay away.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Who do you think you’re talking to?

BORIS
I do not think.

BELA
No, he does not think. He is simply peasant. I tell him what to think.

NIGHTINGALE
Is there a problem, Bela?
BELA.
Is no problem. Doctor Tarzan is learning how to run a clinic.

DOCTOR PARSAN
That's Parsan, I already told you that. I don't need to learn a damn thing from the likes of you. Miss Nightingale, I want to know why this large fellow lives inside our closet?

NIGHTINGALE
Perhaps he likes it.

BELA.
Doctor, look into my eyes.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Look into your what?

BELA
I said, look into my eyes!

DOCTOR PARSAN
Are you nuts? Miss Nightingale, why did you hire these people? (Turns back) Look into your what?

BELA.
Look into my eyes and repeat after me, “I am the big chicken, here.”

NIGHTINGALE
Bela, you’re frightening Mrs. Simpson.

DOCTOR PARSAN
I will not. What did you say...chicken?

BELA
Say out loud, “I am the big chicken, here.”

DOCTOR PARSAN
I will not—I am—I am...I am the big chicken, here.

BELA.
That's right. You are big chicken. Now, flap your arms like chicken, and cluck.

(DOCTOR PARSAN places fists under his armpits and flaps his elbows while walking around the office, clucking.)

DOCTOR PARSAN
Cluck! Cluck! Cluck!
OLD WOMAN
Oh, my! What is this? *(Uncomfortable)* Is he really a doctor?

BELA
*(Laughing)* This is the Sunshine Blood Bank Clinic and this is the big chicken in charge. Allow me to introduce you to our director, Dr. Chicken.

NIGHTINGALE
Oh no, Mrs. Simpson, that's not true. You don't have to worry. He's not really a chicken. *(Aside to BELA)* Bela, what are you doing? How did you—

OLD WOMAN
For God's sake, I can see he's not a chicken! Who the hell is he? Why is he flapping his arms?

BELA
He is director of blood suckers. He runs clinic.

OLD WOMAN
Oh, my! I don't like this! Not one bit!

BELA
He is in charge of taking blood from hobos, the homeless, and the destitute. He really is biggest chicken in Los Angeles. You may watch him strut, as you donate your blood.

DOCTOR PARSAN
*(Strutting around office)* Cluck! Cluck! Cluck!

OLD WOMAN
Oh, dear me! *(Becoming increasingly afraid)* I have to leave. I'm afraid. Something is terribly wrong here. You people are strange. I must go...now.

NIGHTINGALE
Mrs. Simpson, please don't leave. I can explain.

*(DOCTOR PARSAN starts pecking NIGHTINGALE's head.)*

NIGHTINGALE
Stop that, Dr. Parsan!

OLD WOMAN
Aghhh! That man is pecking on your head! He does think he's a chicken. Oh, dear me! This is not a clinic—this is loony bin! *(Terrified)* And I'm leaving.

*(OLD WOMAN runs out of clinic.)*

DOCTOR PARSAN
Cluck! Cluck! Cluck!
NIGHTINGALE

Bela! What have you done?

BORIS

What now, Master?

NIGHTINGALE

Boris, just—oh! (Sitting down) I’m calling my mother. I don’t want to work here, anymore.

BELA

Don’t be silly, Nurse Nightingale, my delicate bird of youth. Boris, please put Doctor Chicken into closet before he lay egg. (Consoling NIGHTINGALE) Ah, now, now! Don’t you worry, my dear. Your Doctor Parsan will be fine in a few hours.

(BORIS leads DOCTOR PARSAN into closet, shuts and locks door. DOCTOR PARSAN continues clucking inside closet.)

NIGHTINGALE

A few hours! You just locked him inside a closet, alone?

BELA

Boris, go inside and keep doctor company.

(BORIS unlocks door, enters and shuts door behind him. BELA crosses to the closet and locks the door.)

BELA, Continues

Now, let us look at our waiting list for donors. (Picks up clip board) Ah, we have four donors tonight. Very good. I go out and bring one in, and you, Miss Nightingale, can take charge of blood bank, again. How do you like that? You will be in charge. (Laughs)

(BELA exits to front office as NIGHTINGALE slumps into chair and begins sobbing.)

NIGHTINGALE

(Wailing) But I don't want to be in charge!

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.)
ACT II

Scene One

(AT RISE: Just before sunset. DOCTOR PARSAN sits with an ice bag on his head. NURSE NIGHTINGALE hovers nearby.)

DOCTOR PARSAN
Wow, what happened to me? One minute I was talking to that troublemaker, Bela, and the next minute I woke up inside that dark closet. Ow! I feel dizzy. Was I acting strange, Miss Nightingale?

NIGHTINGALE
Oh, no. You just lost your breath and fainted. I felt you needed some rest so I had Boris put you into the closet.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Rest? I felt fine when I walked in there, but I can’t remember a thing after that.

Like I said, you fainted.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Really? I had a terrifying nightmare that I was an enormous…. (Chuckles) Oh, never mind! I must have been dreaming.

NIGHTINGALE
Exactly. You must have had food poisoning. I took your blood pressure and you’re normal. I bet it was airline food. You can never be too careful when you fly.

DOCTOR PARSAN
You can say that again. Whew! You know, that oddball Boris was inside the closet when I woke up?

NIGHTINGALE
Are you sure? Maybe you were hallucinating?

DOCTOR PARSAN
No, I’m sure he was there. It was dark, but I recognized that heavy breathing of his. But who knows, maybe you’re right. I was ready to fire those Bulgarian nuts, but now I see it was only my imagination.

NIGHTINGALE
(Shocked) You were going to fire them—and you changed your mind? Well, I’m glad I could help—I guess.
DOCTOR PARSAN
Say, what’s a professional nurse like you doing working in a dump like this? You belong in a top notch hospital.

NIGHTINGALE
I was working in Houston when my mother fell sick. She was alone, so I returned to Los Angeles to take care of her. I decided to take some work to keep myself busy.

DOCTOR PARSAN
I'm sorry to hear about your mother. Is she okay?

NIGHTINGALE
She's getting better.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Oh, what's wrong with her?

NIGHTINGALE
Asthma. But she’s finally recovering. I’m thinking of moving back to Houston.

DOCTOR PARSAN
(Disappointed) Oh? That would be a shame. I need a good nurse, Miss Nightingale. If there’s anything I can do to make you change your mind just let me know.

NIGHTINGALE
You feel that way?

DOCTOR PARSAN
Oh, yes! I think you’re highly competent, serious, professional, both dedicated and smart.

NIGHTINGALE
(Disappointed) Oh? Is that the only reason? I mean—I’m surprised you could see all that in just one day.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Of course, and if I’m not being too personal, I must say you are the loveliest nurse I’ve worked with since my fiancé left me.

NIGHTINGALE
I am? I mean, how could she leave you? Well, I mean, that's really too bad. You'll get over it and meet the right woman, I'm sure...in time.

DOCTOR PARSAN
You think so? You really are a beacon of light in this place...and very pretty, if you don’t mind my saying.
NIGHTINGALE
Do you think so? I think you’re pretty—I mean, nice too. I mean, nice to work for.

DOCTOR PARSAN
(Awkwardly) Of course, we’re both nice to work for. I mean, it’s nice to have you work here.
(Leaving) Remember, if there is anything I can do….

Like what?

NIGHTINGALE

DOCTOR PARSAN
You know, anything. Well, I’ll be in my office.

Oh?

NIGHTINGALE

DOCTOR PARSAN
Here’s my office telephone number. If you need anything, or want to talk or something you call that number.

Or something?

NIGHTINGALE

DOCTOR PARSAN
Yes, 'something'. Just call and I’ll make sure it gets fixed.

You'll fix it?

NIGHTINGALE

DOCTOR PARSAN
Of course.

NIGHTINGALE
Well, you can call here, as well…to find out what I’m doing…I mean, what we’re doing for the donors.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Yes, of course. Well, it was lovely…I mean nice speaking to you again, Nurse Nightingale.

Call me Florence.

NIGHTINGALE

DOCTOR PARSAN
Okay, Florence. Call me David.

Okay, David. Such a sweet name.
(BORIS starts rattling the closet door)

BORIS
Let me out! Boris want to get out of closet.

DOCTOR PARSAN
My God! Is he still inside that closet?

BELA
(Enters from back door; blood on his lips.) Good evening, everyone! What a lovely evening in the city. There is a full moon out tonight. It makes my spine shiver, my toes tingle, my blood boil, and my heart dance to the serenade of dreams, those dark foreboding dreams where cryptic melodies of death sing dirges to the memories of human desire, desires all left desolate and on fire. Delight of delights, I search the night, howl to a silvery moon which gives me light, and offer praise to my never ending flight.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Did I hear him right? There must be something wrong with my hearing.

BORIS
(Rattles the door) Master! Master! Let me out. Boris want to work.

BELA
Keep silent, Boris.

DOCTOR PARSAN
I’m not feeling well. What exactly is this man, Florence?

NIGHTINGALE
(Forcing laughter) Oh, you silly goose! David, I have to confess to you our little secret. Guess what? This is Hollywood, and our phlebotomist, Bela, is an aspiring thespian.

BELA
(Laughs) I am no such thing. That is most impossible. I am not even woman!

NIGHTINGALE
(Whispering) Will you please shut up?

DOCTOR PARSAN
An actor? (Laughs) If he was playing a ghoul, I would believe it.

BELA
A ghoul? Ha! Don’t be ridiculous. Boris is ghoul—not me. I am a...a....
NIGHTINGALE
...a heck of a joker! Well, I guess we’re ready to start tonight’s work, and Doctor Parsan I know you have lots of paperwork to do, so get along, now. I hope you remember our little conversation. I’ll be here all night, so don’t be shy.

DOCTOR PARSAN
And don’t you be shy. Bye-bye!

(DOCTOR PARSAN exits through front office; BORIS rattles the closet door.)

BELA
Patience, Boris!

NIGHTINGALE
(Dreamily) Toodle-oo, David.

(BELA unlocks closet door. BORIS enters from the closet.)

NIGHTINGALE
(Yells at BELA) How could you do this to me? Stop acting so crazy! Why is Boris still living inside our closet? Didn’t the doctor fire him? Get him out, before I start to cry.

BELA
Boris is my assistant and my servant. He helps me work. Why so angry, Miss Nightingale? It is beautiful night, a night for love and romance. Maybe you fall in love with Doctor Chicken?

NIGHTINGALE
Stop calling him that!

BELA
Why? Did you not see him strut around office clucking? He was like a great giant chicken. Boris, did you see him?

BORIS
Yes. Maybe we make chicken soup.

NIGHTINGALE
You lay a hand on David and I will kill you!

BELA
David? Ah, you use first name? How nice. Maybe you are in love.

NIGHTINGALE
Don’t be ridiculous.
BELA
Yes, I think so. *(To BORIS)* Boris, our delicate bird, Miss Nightingale, is fluttering with passion for our Big Chicken.

BORIS
Good! Perhaps Doctor Chicken will lay some eggs for us to eat.

NIGHTINGALE
Stop calling him *Doctor Chicken*! I’ve had it with you Bulgarian baboons! Good night!

*(NIGHTINGALE storms out.)*

BELA
She called us baboons, but does not like when we say Doctor Chicken. What do you think, Boris? Americans are strange, are they not?

BORIS
Yes. They frighten me.

BELA
I understand. She is in love with him. He is in love with her. Why doesn't she demand copulation like normal Bulgarian woman, so she can get back to work?

BORIS
Because she is not Bulgarian.

BELA
Ah, of course. There is no hope for Americans.

BORIS
They are stupid people.

BELA
I am afraid so. Tonight I feast on big, round, teenage boy, very fat and very drunk. He must have been three hundred pounds.

BORIS
Really? Americans are so big, no?

BELA
Yes. He was lying outside the House of Billion Dollar Burgers, in alley with ketchup and super-size sauce all over his face.

BORIS
They do not drink wine in America, only super-size sauce.
BELA

So true! But he was feast for a king...or a vampire. *(laughs)* He must have been drunk, since I feel so light headed. I even feel like dancing. *(begins dancing; flaunting his cape)* Look at me! I am now the Billion Dollar Burger King! The Billion Dollar Burger King! Everybody have a chicken-wing, because I am Billion Dollar Burger King! Oh, I must laugh. I just want to dance and sing! Come on, Boris, let us do Perestroika and sing about the Billion Dollar Burger King.

BORIS

Yes, master!

*(BORIS and BELA dance wildly around the room as LIGHTS FADE OUT.)*

ACT II

Scene Two

*(AT RISE: Several hours later. A sound is heard in the alley behind the clinic. BORIS opens the rear door then turns to BELA.)*

BORIS

Master, looks like we have a donor lurking outside. Should I bring him in?

BELA

Is it man or woman?

BORIS

Man! Very rough man. He must be killer.

BELA

Do not be silly. Americans do not kill, they hire lawyers. Bring him in.

BORIS

Master, do we take all his….

BELA

Shush! Yes, we do. Now catch him before he runs away!

*(BORIS exits quickly returns with a scowling, suspicious fellow.)*

INVESTIGATOR

So, you guys do the bloodletting around here?
BELA
I beg your pardon, were you addressing me? I am chief phlebotomy technician of Sunrise Blood Bank. I have no cards to introduce myself but my name is Count... *(Halts and laughs)* I am the Count! Yes...one, two, three! You see? Do you watch Sesame street? This is delightful program for lazy, spoiled, children. Here is my trusted assistant, Mr. Borinski Meniquovadis—but you may call him Boris, or just boring! *(Laughs)* You see, I tell little joke. So, relax. I will personally set you up and draw blood. It is quick, painless, and Boris will pay you thirty American dollars. Then you go your way, buy some wine, and vomit in alley. We don't care...this is America! *(Laughs)* Are you ready?

DETECTIVE
You don't sound American to me? How long have you two clowns been in Los Angeles?

BELA
Long enough. Now, sit down.

INVESTIGATOR
You have a license?

BELA
To drive car? Yes! Now, sit down, I say!

INVESTIGATOR
No, I mean do you have a medical license to draw people's blood? Let me see it.

BELA
*Let you see it?* Do you have license to be jack-ass? Boris, I need help.

INVESTIGATOR
Did you know some bodies were found outside your clinic? Were they donors, also?

BELA
Who knows? We don't have donors, we have winos. They come, they go, they sell blood, they buy wine, eat cheeseburgers out of dumpsters, and get hit by cars. Who cares? Sit down, don't worry, shut up, and we draw blood.

INVESTIGATOR
I have another question.

BELA
No more questions. You have too many questions. You give me headache. Boris, grab this wino's arms!

*(BORIS grabs INVESTIGATOR who immediately resists. Both of them wrestle, knocking over lamps and desk items, then tumble onto the floor as NURSE FENDER walks in.)*
NURSE FENDER
Oh, my word! What's going on here?

BELA
We prepare donor. He is afraid of needles.

(BORIS and the INVESTIGATOR continue to wrestle on the floor.)

NURSE FENDER
Where did that man come from? How did he get in here?

BORIS
Boris find him lurking in alley.

NURSE FENDER
I don’t believe that gentleman wants to donate blood.

BELA
Ha! Well, too bad for him. It is too late to change mind. He must give blood.

NURSE FENDER.
No, he doesn’t. You can’t force people to give blood.

BELA
Why not? We do this in Transylvania all the time. He has no choice. We have Boris to help.

(BORIS and INVESTIGATOR continue to wrestle on floor.)

DETECTIVE
Let go of my ankle, you damn ape!

BORIS
You must give blood, before you get wine. Master, should I hit him with club?

BELA
Of course.

NURSE FENDER.
No, don’t do that! Stop!

(NURSE FENDER dives into the melee. All three get tied up, wrestling on the floor.)

INVESTIGATOR
Hey, lady, let go of me!

NURSE FENDER.
I’m trying to help you…ahhhh!
(INVESTIGATOR mistakenly strikes NURSE FENDER. She faints.)

INVESTIGATOR
(Rises holding his battered head) You birds are all going to jail. (Holds up recording device) I got enough evidence on my recorder to put you all away for the rest of your life. I’m shutting down this hell-hole, you foreign scum!

BELA
Okay, you win! I see you are too cunning. I bow to your prowess, your investigative guile, your deceitful behavior. You are obviously some kind of American genius. We have been beaten, Boris. Let investigative guy go. (Glares at INVESTIGATOR’s small recorder) You call that recorder? It is so tiny. Nothing but cheap toy. Ha! It is nothing but piece of cheap crap!

DETECTIVE
Crap? Hey, this cost me four hundred bucks! It’s digital. This is the best model on the market.

BELA
The supermarket, perhaps? It is typical piece of American crap.

DETECTIVE
Do you see this red transmitter light? It’s filming your every move right now. This is no piece of crap!

BELA
Look at toy, Boris. Investigator guy has nothing but cheap piece of crap.

BORIS
Does not surprise me. Americans only make crap.

DETECTIVE
Hey, watch what you say!

BELA

DETECTIVE
You foreigners don’t know quality when you see it! I bet you don’t have flush toilets in that Bulgar city you come from.

(BORIS pulls out billy-club and hits INVESTIGATOR over the head. He collapses into BELA’s arms who slips him into the chair and straps him down.)

BELA
We do not need flush toilets. We are not full of crap, like you Americans.
BORIS

He is ready, master.

BELA

Very good, Boris. Please, step back as I taste the liquor of the devil.

*(BELA howls like a wolf.)*

BORIS

Bon appetit, monsieur!

BELA

Merci beau coup, mon ami!

*(With a flourish of his cape, BELA covers the INVESTIGATOR and drains his blood. BLACKOUT.)*

**ACT II**

**Scene Three**

*(AT RISE: Several hours later; NURSE FENDER, holding her swollen jaw, attempts to talk to DOCTOR PARSAN.)*

NURSE FENDER

I’m sorry I had to page you, Doctor, but please! Please, Doctor Parsan, you don't have any choice. Fire those Bulgarians, now! They're nuts!

DOCTOR PARSAN

Now, just calm down and tell me what happened, Nurse Fender?

NURSE FENDER

I heard loud scuffling in the clinic from my office. I rushed down and found Bela and Boris, manhandling another donor. Boris was wrestling with the man. I tried to stop them but he socked me in the jaw and knocked me out.

DOCTOR PARSAN

Bela struck you?

NURSE FENDER

No, the donor. When I awoke I found myself lying all alone on the clinic floor.

DOCTOR PARSAN

You say the donor socked you? Well, obviously it was another wino. Sounds like someone should be minding their own business, Nurse Fender.
NURSE FENDER
This is my business! Boris held the man while Bela was strapped him to the table. The client was screaming at the top of his lungs to be released and then he threatened to shut down our clinic. You have to fire them now.

DOCTOR PARSAN
It seems you are jumping to conclusions. That wino was obviously dangerous. Isn't it a pity? You try to give these people a hand up, and they behave like animals. No gratitude. But Nurse Fender you should know, by now, these derelicts are unpredictable.

NURSE FENDER
He wasn't a derelict. He was an undercover investigator sent by the chief of police.

DOCTOR PARSAN
How would you know?

NURSE FENDER.
I called the police when I came to. They told me.

DOCTOR PARSAN
You called the police without telling me? That doesn't seem right. Who's running this blood bank, anyway? You asked for police without my permission?

NURSE FENDER
No, of course not. I only called the police. I didn't ask anyone to come. Why would I do that? I'm the one who hired Bela.

DOCTOR PARSAN
You think it's your right to hire and fire people? You better be careful, Nurse Fender, I'm in charge here. I suggest you ignore it.

NURSE FENDER.
Ignore it? My jaw feels like it's broken.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Let me see it. (Wiggles her jaw; she winces.) Pretty swollen but it's nothing serious. Now if you don't mind, I have a bed I'd like to get back to.

NURSE FENDER
Is that it? Is that all you're going to do? This place has become a circus with those Bulgarian screwballs.

DOCTOR PARSAN
There will be no racial epithets in my clinic. Don't overreact, Nurse Fender. This is a blood bank on skid row. All of this comes with the territory. (Laughs) This is not Cedar Sinai Hospital, you know.
(BELA and BORIS enter from rear door.)

BELA

(With a flourish of his cape) Good evening, my fellow blood-suckers! What a splendid evening! We have eight fresh pints of blood. Show them Boris!

(BORIS opens refrigerator door and reveals eight red containers.)

BORIS

Only one donor!

NURSE FENDER.

One donor? That's impossible. You see, they can't even keep records.

But is true!

BELA

Quiet, Boris.

NURSE FENDER

I've seen how you birds get blood. You nearly killed that donor tonight in a free for all. I was knocked out. That's not how we run a business, here. You can't tie people down, or knock them out and force them to give blood.

BORIS

We can't? Why not?

BELA

Boris, I say be quiet!

DOCTOR PARSAN

Let's not get hysterical, Nurse Fender. Bela has a good reason for his behavior, I'm sure. Don't you Bela?

BELA

Boris and I were frightened. We had to protect the clinic and Nurse Fender when this wino attacked Boris. Naturally, I felt especially concerned for Nurse Fender's honor.

DOCTOR PARSAN

There, you see? It was all a misunderstanding. Bela was trying to protect you, and you didn't even know it. You really should thank them.

BELA

There is no need. I only do my duty. This is who I am. And Nurse Fender, you do not need to thank me, even though I protect your honor.
NURSE FENDER
My honor? I tried to stop you from beating up a helpless man and got knocked out. Then you two left me on the floor, unconscious. Why in the world should I thank you? That poor fellow disappeared and I have a broken jaw. You did this. I was the victim!

BELA
Yes, everybody in America is victim. He came to rob blood bank and Boris was holding him for police when you interfered.

NURSE FENDER
Rob a blood bank? Why would anybody rob blood?

BELA
It happens all the time in Transylvania. But he escaped after you interfered.

NURSE FENDER
Interfered? The man was screaming for his life while Boris was hitting him over the head with his black-jack.

BELA
Screaming is common ploy of brigands and villains. Can you not see that, you ignorant cow!

DOCTOR PARSAN
Now, Bela. Let's be professional.

NURSE FENDER
He's no professional? He's running a three-ring circus down there!

BELA
Well, perhaps you would like to be our dancing elephant?

DOCTOR PARSAN
Whoa! That will be enough from the both of you. Nurse Fender, please, I can handle this. Bela from this day forth you will follow all guidelines I set down and obey our head nurse, Miss Nightingale.

BELA
She is not head nurse, she is only helper. She was not even working here, last week. Nurse Fender assigned her to me only as my assistant.

DOCTOR PARSAN
Is that true, Nurse Fender.

NURSE FENDER
Well, it's apparent that Bela's command of English is horrible. So, I asked Nurse Nightingale to help him.
DOCTOR PARSAN
But Florence told me she was in charge of the clinic. Isn't she in charge?

NURSE FENDER
Not exactly.

BELA
Apparently Miss Nightingale's command of English language is not so good, either.

(BORIS and BELA begin laughing.)

DOCTOR PARSAN
Wake her up—I mean, call her in, immediately.

I thought she left early.

DOCTOR PARSAN
She called me. She wasn’t feeling well. She’s resting in the lounge. Ask her to come in.

Yes, doctor. (Exits)

NURSE FENDER

BELA
This is most unfortunate. It must be hard running blood bank when slave lie to you. Very bad, indeed. In Transylvania, we fix lying scum very fast.

DOCTOR PARSAN
How dare you! You take that back. Florence is the most decent woman I have ever loved—I mean, known. She would never lie to me.

BELA
Loved? So, it is true. Our delicate song bird has laid some eggs on director. Did she sit on you?

DOCTOR PARSAN
I beg your pardon!

BELA
You may beg all you want. You are not pardoned. Miss Nightingale is in charge only because she sit on Director.

DOCTOR PARSAN
What the hell does that mean? That’s absurd.
BELA
It is not absurd. We do this in Transylvania with our peasants. But we do not put them in charge. We put them in barn.

(BORIS and BELA laugh.)

DOCTOR PARSAN
You Bulgarians are an insult to decent behavior. I've had enough. One more word and you’re fired.

BELA
Nobly said. Nurse Nightingale plays in your office polishing your trumpet while we wrestle with your human debris. In Transylvania we reserve majestic name for you. Vampire!

DOCTOR PARSAN
How dare you? There is no need for talk like that. That’s a lie.

BELA
Is it? You invite the destitute, the disturbed, the wretched into your parlor like spider, stick needles into veins, suck out blood then sell to hospital. You pay with cheap bottle of wine to give hobo hope until he straggle back to be milked again, like cow. I say you are vampire. Do not be ashamed, Doctor Parsan. In Transylvania we build statue to vampire like you. You are to be respected. You are sly, powerful; you drink blood of vermin we call human. Stand with me! Be proud! (Flourishes cape) You have what all vampires desire; title, power, respect! You devour the homeless, the hopeless, the helpless. Don't you know you are great vampire, as I am? I shall call you Count Parsan, vampire of Hollywood Hell.

DOCTOR PARSAN
That does it, you and Boris are fired!

BELA
Ha! You cannot fire me. Look into my eyes, Dr. Parsan. Ask me for blood.

DOCTOR PARSAN
You’re insane. Get out of here. Take that zombie with you—both of you get out, right now...get out, you two...you two...

(BELA steps up to DOCTOR PARSAN and stares into his eyes.)

BELA
Look into my eyes! You are no longer director. You are no longer doctor. You are pig.

DOCTOR PARSAN
I am not standing for this any longer—not any longer—I am not a... (Grunts)...pig. I'm the director of this blood bank and you're fired. I am not a pig! (Grunts) Oh, god! Stop this. (Grunting; falls on his hands and knees) I am a doctor, I tell you! Help me! I tell you I am a doctor!
(DOCTOR PARSAN rushes about the floor on his knees, grunting.)

   NURSE FENDER

(Enters) My God! What is happening? Has the doctor lost his mind?

   BELA

No, he has found it!

   BORIS

(Shrugs) This is common in Transylvania.

   BELA

(Pointing to closet) I command you! Go to closet, Doctor Parsan! Go inside and do not come out!

   DOCTOR PARSAN

Yes, Master. (Grunts)

(DOCTOR PARSAN crawls into the closet. BORIS shuts the door.)

   BELA

Let us go, Boris. We are no longer needed in America. We go home. Good day to you, Nurse Fender. I cannot work in your country. Nobody here knows who they really are. Bon soir, mon ami! Apres moi, les deluge!

(NIGHTINGALE, her hair and clothing askew, enters quickly from the office door just in time to see BELA, with a flourish of his cape turn and exit, laughing. BORIS exits just behind him and slams the back door.)

   NIGHTINGALE

Oh, my! They certainly were in a rush! (Turns, smoothing her hair with her hand) Oh, Nurse Fender. Are you still here? Isn't your shift over?

   NURSE FENDER

Yes it is. But we had an unexpected mishap, something you need to know about.

   NIGHTINGALE

Really? Did you see Bela and Boris rushing out? I thought it was time for Bela to work.

   NURSE FENDER

Not tonight. They're not coming back. They just got fired.

   NIGHTINGALE

Fired? Oh, dear me! That's too bad...well, not really! David...Doctor Parsan did the right thing. I bet he's finally happy.
NURSE FENDER
Not exactly. He's sitting inside the closet, and won't come out.

NIGHTINGALE
Why is he inside the closet?

NURSE FENDER
Bela told him to.

NIGHTINGALE
Is it locked?

NURSE FENDER
No, Dr. Parsan simply can't come out.

NIGHTINGALE
What? (Rushes over to the closet and swings it open, and sees DOCTOR PARSON on his knees looking up at her.) David, why on earth are you sitting inside this closet? Did those brutes hurt you? (Hugs him; he grunts) Are you alright? Why don't you get off your knees?

(DOCTOR PARSAN smiles up at her as he continues grunting.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes