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Playscripts, Inc.
450 Seventh Ave, Suite 809
New York, NY 10123

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Many thanks to the original cast, crew and Artistic Director of the Virginia City Players. Thanks for helping me find the funny.

Cast of Characters

COUNT DRACULA, the man of the house

MINA, the perfect wife

MADELINE, oldest daughter, bright and sunny with a cruel streak

MILDRED, youngest daughter, dark and brooding

HUMPHREY ENGLISH, a devious young suitor

BERTRAM, a put-upon suitor

AUDIENCE WOMAN (MRS. ARTSMORE), a matron of the arts

RENFIELD, former asylum patient turned butler

JONATHON HARKER, slightly nervous vampire hunter

DR. VAN HELSING, professional vampire hunter

ACTOR, played by the actor playing “Bertram” in original production

SUITOR #1, real estate broker

SUITOR #2, mama’s boy

SUITOR #3, country boy

SUITOR #4, door-to-door salesman

SUITOR #5, just plain weird

SUITOR #6, exhausted actor

STAGE MANAGER, the actual stage manager of the production

Note: Although the roles of Madeline and Mildred were each played by a single actor in the original production, subsequent productions may cast the younger versions of the characters with age-appropriate actors, and they may be played as young as age 9 and 8 respectively.

Setting

The suburbs of Transylvania.

Time

Late 1800s.

Production Notes

The original production of *Dracula's Daughters: A Family Comedy* was produced by the Virginia City Players, a company specializing in period melodramas and comedies. Therefore, the roles of “Mrs. Artsmore” and “Actor (Jamie)” were played as if the audience member and cast member, respectively, were from the period as well. Most companies will probably want to play those roles as contemporary.

Feel free to have “Mrs. Artsmore” leave and re-enter the stage as you see fit. In the original production she stayed onstage for about the first third, then we had her exit and re-enter for her lines, often creating a physical bit out of the situation—actors running into her, etc.

The graveyard in the beginning was created using a roll drop, and when the fake production of *Dracula* “ended,” another roll drop with the theater logo on it came in to mask the stage. So when “Mrs. Artsmore” is calling for the roll drops to come in and out, that is what she is referring to. In subsequent productions, her lines may be altered to reflect the actual production of the play—“Lights out!” “Curtain up!” etc.

In the original production we had a stake strapped to Dracula’s chest, complete with a cardboard “pool” of blood at the base, for the first two “fake” endings of the play. Then during the transition to the “real” play, he took off the stake and we used a full stake for the first scene of the “romantic” version, thus allowing it to be pounded in and pulled all the way out.

Once the graveyard scenes are over, the stage is divided into three sections—the drawing room, the swamp and the porch. When the

dining room is called for, the actor playing “Renfield” brought in a table and tablecloth, which was set downstage of the drawing room area and isolated by lights during “Mrs. Artsmore’s” lines. After the scene the same actor struck the table. If your theater has the room, a permanent dining room area would be perfect.

An underscore was used liberally in the first production, including musical stings when “Mina” announced each of her household tasks and when the young girls noticed blood. Feel free to use as much or as little music and sound effects as needed.

Acknowledgments

Dracula’s Daughters: A Family Comedy was commissioned by the Virginia City Players (Stacey Gordon, Artistic Director). The play opened June 25, 2008 at the Virginia City Opera House, Virginia City, Montana. It was directed by Sean Abley and stage managed by Katie M. Manion. Costume design by Asha MacDonald. Set design by Travis Stevens. Musical direction and underscoring by Myles Nardinger. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| COUNT DRACULA | Jimmy Moore |
| MINA | Heather Capello |
| MADLINE..... | Sarah Ittner |
| MILDRED..... | Heather Schmidt |
| HUMPHREY ENGLISH..... | C.J. Langdon |
| BERTRAM..... | Jamie Parnell |
| MRS. ARTSMORE..... | Deena Badr |
| RENFIELD..... | Justin Fatz |
| JONATHON HARKER | C.J. Langdon |
| DR. VAN HELSING | Justin Fatz |
| JAMIE (ACTOR)..... | Jamie Parnell |
| SUITOR #1, 3, 5 | C.J. Langdon |
| SUITOR #2, 4, 6 | Jamie Parnell |

DRACULA'S DAUGHTERS: A FAMILY COMEDY

by Sean Abley

(Lights up.)

(Setting: graveyard.)

(We open on what appears to be the end of a theatrical version of "Dracula." JONATHON HARKER stands over the body of DRACULA, while VAN HELSING finishes pounding in the stake. MINA cowers nearby.)

VAN HELSING. In the name of all that have befallen his gruesome fate, I end the life of Count Dracula!

(VAN HELSING pounds the stake into DRACULA, who writhes in pain. MINA screams and faints into JONATHON HARKER's arms.)

VAN HELSING. The curse is lifted! The Count of Darkness has been defeated!

(End of the show. The theater logo roll drop falls. An ACTOR comes out and addresses the audience as they applaud [or don't].)

(Setting: downstage.)

ACTOR. Thank you! Your applause is deafening! That's our show for tonight. We hope you enjoyed *Dracula* as much as we enjoyed performing it for you. *(Insert any announcements pertaining to school or community here: Our next play is... To get involved in the theater..., etc.)*

(MRS. ARTSMORE stands up in the audience.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Hold on a moment. Is that it?

ACTOR. Excuse me?

MRS. ARTSMORE. Is that it? Is that the end of your theatrical entertainment? Driving a stake through that poor nobleman's chest?

ACTOR. Well, we didn't have the budget to chop off his head and put it on a stick—

MRS. ARTSMORE. Decapitation? On this stage? Has the theater come to this? Ghastly displays of brutality in lieu of strong script writing and actors' characterizations?

ACTOR. Madam...?

MRS. ARTSMORE. Mrs. Artsmore, if you please.

ACTOR. Mrs. Artsmore, *Dracula* ends with a stake being driven into the heart of, well, Dracula. That is how the book ends.

MRS. ARTSMORE. The book? I don't care how the book ends, Mr. Actor Person. Books are for those too lazy to sit and watch something.

ACTOR. But Mrs. Artsmore...

MRS. ARTSMORE. Enough! I didn't pay ten dollars for this... bloodlust!

(She makes her way through the audience and up onto the stage.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. When I attend the theater, I expect stories of romance. Men and women courting, falling into amorous embraces, heaving bosoms, fainting spells, duels fought for a lady's honor, bare ankles demurely revealed, *only* after nine P.M. in the evening when children are safely in their beds. *(Note: The previous line may be cut if played contemporary.)* And in the rare occurrence the gentleman and lady's love remains unrequited, one or both of them tastefully throw themselves into the sea.

(The rest of the actors poke their heads out, including the actor playing DRACULA [complete with stake still in his chest], confused.)

MINA. *(Name of ACTOR),* is there a problem?

MRS. ARTSMORE. If you consider a patron of the theater thoroughly displeased with your offering this evening, then yes, there is a problem. And I'm sure these patrons of the theatrical arts would agree. *(Turns to the audience.)* Gentleladies and gentlemen, wouldn't you rather see love stories that blossom? Happy conclusions to your theater entertainment? Like *Romeo and Juliet*?

MINA. Romeo and Juliet died...

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(To audience:)* We are the audience, and we determine the content of our entertainment, isn't that right? Clap if you'd like more romance tonight. *(A beat.)* I said CLAP IF YOU'D LIKE TO SEE MORE ROMANCE!!

(The audience claps.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Well?

ACTOR. Um...well... All right. I think I have an idea. Yes, I have it. Roll drop up!

(The roll drop rolls up, revealing the actors in various states of taking off their makeup, changing out of their costumes.)

(Setting: graveyard.)

ACTOR. Places please for the new ending to the romantic version of *Dracula*.

(The confused actors move into their final pose for the ending of "Dracula.")

ACTOR. *(To the actors:)* Follow me. *(Narrating:)* Dr. Van Helsing realized the error of his ways, and stopped hammering the stake into Count Dracula's chest.

VAN HELSING. Uh... I'm sorry, Count. I mistook you for that...other vampire...the bad one. Who did bad things. He's very bad, but you, you're just peachy.

DRACULA. Oh, well, thanks. No hard feelings. *(Re: the stake:)* Once this scabs over, I'm sure it won't leave much of a mark.

JONATHON. Mina, I think you and I should just be friends. I know your true love is Count Dracula, and I wouldn't want to stand in the way of that.

MINA. Thank you, Jonathon. Oh, Count Dracula, will you marry me?

(COUNT and MINA hug. The ACTOR and company wildly encourage the audience to applaud.)

ACTOR. And they all lived happily ever after in a very romantic way, kissing frequently on the lips rather than driving stakes through each others' hearts. And when they did drink blood, it was in a toast to the happy couple at a wedding. Wasn't that romantic! Thank you for your applause. (*Insert school or community announcements here.*)

(*MRS. ARTSMORE shoves the ACTOR out of the way.*)

MRS. ARTSMORE. This is absolute nonsense. I attend the theater for love, romance, and blood drinking...but in a romantic way! Obviously, this needs the delicate touch of a woman. I've studied dramatics with the local amateur theatrical guild. I'm well versed in the classic tales of love, such as *Wuthering Heights*.

MINA. But Catherine dies in *Wuthering*...

MRS. ARTSMORE. I can create a story that will satisfy all lovers of love. Everyone off stage. I said EVERYONE GET OFF THE STAGE THIS INSTANT!!

(*The cast scatters.*)

MRS. ARTSMORE. ROLL DROP!!

(*The roll drop drops.*)

MRS. ARTSMORE. ROMANTIC MUSIC!!

(*The PIANO PLAYER [or sound system] plays romantic underscore.*)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Ladies and gentleman, the Virginia City Players would like to present the original, romantic, family comedy, *Dracula's Daughters*.

(*She moves to the side of the stage.*)

MRS. ARTSMORE. BRING OUT THE ROLLDROP!!

(*Setting: graveyard.*)

(*The drop rolls up to reveal DRACULA on the ground, VAN HELSING about to pound in the stake, JONATHON HARKER and MINA standing by.*)

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrates:)* As the villainous Dr. Van Helsing prepared to deliver the death blow to the misunderstood Count Dracula...

(VAN HELSING raises the hammer to pound in the stake.)

VAN HELSING. In the name of all that have befallen his gruesome fate, I end the life of Count Dracula! Die! Foul! Beast! Diefoulbeast! Die! Die! Die!

(VAN HELSING drives the stake into DRACULA's chest with each word. DRACULA writhes in agony.)

MINA. Wait!

VAN HELSING. Wait?

COUNT DRACULA. *(Dying:)* I curse...your...timing... *(He's dead.)*

JONATHON. Mina, this monster ingested the blood of countless innocents. He walks the earth, but it is a walk of eternal, living death.

VAN HELSING. Undead, if we're being accurate.

MINA. But he's so...handsome!

JONATHON. Mina, you've been put under his wretched spell!

MINA. And how!

(MINA moves over to the COUNT and tugs on the stake. The COUNT's body jerks up as she does.)

VAN HELSING. Child, stop that gruesome display this instant!

MINA. I won't! I'm a girl in love, and I'll do whatever it takes when my true love is at stake!

(She pulls the stake out of COUNT's heart. He revives.)

JONATHON. Mina, leave that monster's side this instant!

VAN HELSING. My dear, you've been bitten by the Count and shared his unclean blood. You will become the bride of the undead!

MINA. Oh, bother!

DRACULA. Not so fast, Dr. Van Helsing. The curse only takes effect if the girl dies before you can dispatch me. As I recall, you recently drove a stake thru my heart, thus dispatching me. So the curse is lifted, leaving her to choose her fate.

MINA. Handsome and smart!

DRACULA. Well...

MINA. And humble! What else could a woman want in a man?

JONATHON. A pulse, perhaps? *(Raises his stake.)* Unhand her, foul beast!

(DRACULA bares his teeth at JONATHON, who quickly steps away.)

JONATHON. I'll be over here.

MINA. Oh, Mr. Harker, you are the weak one, aren't you? I need a husband who will leap to my defense when called upon, not skitter away like a spider fleeing a broom.

JONATHON. I didn't skitter...

MINA. Count, how do you feel about children?

DRACULA. With the proper breeding and a strong parental influence, they can be quite delicious, er, delightful.

VAN HELSING. Child, this man drank your blood, and forced you to drink his!

MINA. Finally, someone who remembers how to court a woman properly! Gentlemen, I believe I've made my choice. Count Dracula, I am yours if you'll have me!

DRACULA. Mina, if they hadn't staked it, my heart would be yours.

MINA. Goodbye, Mr. Harker! I'm sure you'll find a young woman to whom you can attach yourself. I'm off!

MRS. ARTSMORE. BRING DOWN THE CURTAIN!!

(The curtain drops, the actors scramble to keep it from falling on them. MRS. ARTSMORE is left alone onstage.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrates:)* And with that, Count Dracula whisked Mina away to a castle by the sea. They were married, and eventually sired two daughters, Madeline and Mildred.

(Setting: Dracula's drawing room.)

(COUNT is in drawing room. MADELINE [13] and MILDRED [12] rush into the room. MADELINE is dressed in a frilly smock, while MILDRED is dressed in trousers and carries a stuffed toad with a stake thru it. MILDRED chases MADELINE around the room.)

MADELINE. Father, help!

MILDRED. Get back here!

MADELINE. She's trying to kill me!

DRACULA. Stop running this instant!

(MINA enters carrying a soufflé.)

MINA. What is going on here! You two sound like the villagers outside the Frankenstein's house! You've caused my ferret soufflé to fall!

MADELINE. Mildred pushed me into the sun without my parasol!

MINA. Mildred! She'll burn to a crisp without her parasol!

MILDRED. But she drove a stake thru my Thomas Toad doll! *(She reveals the doll.)*

DRACULA. A stake!

MINA. Now, Count...

(MINA exits with the soufflé.)

DRACULA. Young lady, the only stakes we allow in this house are rare with a side dish!

MADELINE. It was just a joke! Just like putting Lenore Lizard into the forest guillotine!

(MADELINE reveals the Lenore Lizard doll with detachable head. MILDRED screams.)

MILDRED. (*Screams:*) Lenore! My lizard! This is my personal possession. How many times have I told you—stay out of my tomb!

(*MINA enters with knitting. She has barely started with just a few rows on the needles.*)

MINA. Young lady, that is not a proper use of your alone time! Where did you learn this behavior?

MADLINE. From this...

(*MADLINE hands MINA a book.*)

MINA. “How to Make Friends and Decapitate People” by the Marquis de Sade? Where did you find this?

MADLINE. Under the mattress in father’s coffin.

DRACULA. (*Embarrassed:*) Oh! Well, you know, I read it for the articles...

MINA. We’ll talk about this later. You need to discipline your daughter while I work on this sweater for Mildred. (*Perfect housewife take.*)

(*MINA sits on the couch next to MILDRED.*)

DRACULA. You’ve decapitated the last of your sister’s toys. (*Eerie, commanding:*) Down! Down to your coffin immediately, without any supper! And think about what you’ve done!

MADLINE. Oh, daddy, really!

(*Music cue: eerie underscore.*)

DRACULA. (*Trying to hypnotize MADLINE:*) Down! Down! Down from whence you came! Foul girl, down to your coffin! I command thee!

(*MADLINE giggles and backs COUNT into a chair.*)

MADLINE. (*Giggles.*) Oh, daddy, you’re so amusing when you try to hypnotize us. (*She sits on his lap.*)

(*Music cue: Madeline’s version of eerie underscore.*)

MADLINE. (*Saccharine special:*) Now, do you really want me to go down to my coffin? It’s hours until sunrise.

DRACULA. Do as you're told, young lady.

(MINA reveals the completed sweater.)

MINA. *(To MILDRED:)* There, done! *(Perfect housewife take.)* This is going to look quite nice on you.

MADLINE. But daddy, I still have homework to do. I'm writing a paper for class. The assignment is to write an essay about important and influential men and their important...ness. And you know who I picked?

MILDRED. Oh, please!

DRACULA. No. Who?

MADLINE. Why you, of course!

DRACULA. Me?

MILDRED. Father, don't let her...!

MADLINE. Who else can climb up the bald face of a castle wall? Who else can turn into a bat? Or mist? Or control men's minds by hypnotizing them? Or become invisible?

DRACULA. Well, I, you know, these are just, abilities, things I've developed over the years. Nothing important... *(Smells something.)* Wait, what is that?

MADLINE. Nothing!

DRACULA. What is that on your breath?! *(Shoves her off.)* You've been eating garlic!

MINA. Madeline! You know your father has forbidden garlic in this house! It's a good thing you're half my daughter or you'd be breaking out in blisters right now!

MILDRED. She does it all the time! She has some hidden in her tomb, under her coffin!

MADLINE. But all the children do it! The Wolframs let their children eat garlic! And Mr. and Mrs. Im-Ho-Tep don't get all unwrapped when their children experiment with garlic.

MINA. You aren't living in the Im-Ho-Tep's pyramid, and I'm not your mummy. (*Mouths "I'm sorry" to the audience for the pun.*) Garlic is forbidden in this castle, and as long as you're living here, you'll abide by the rules.

DRACULA. Straight to your coffin without any supper. Down with you!

MADLINE. I can't wait until I'm of marrying age! I'll have my own castle, and I'll eat garlic, and drink holy water, and carve as many stakes as I want! Just you wait!

(*MADLINE storms off. COUNT falls back into his chair.*)

DRACULA. (*Distraught:*) You're killing me! Again!

MILDRED. Ha!

MINA. Don't "Ha!," young lady. You pushed your sister into the sunlight without her parasol. True she won't burst into flames like your father, but she'd suffer a nasty burn that would take weeks to heal. And what about these trousers? Why in the world do you insist on wearing trousers?

MILDRED. I like trousers. They're much more comfortable than a silly old dress. And when I'm tending my black widow colony, it's much easier to crawl under the barn when I'm wearing my trousers.

MINA. Count, I need to have a talk with young Mildred.

DRACULA. Then talk.

MINA. A lady talk. For young ladies. About lady subjects. Between ladies.

DRACULA. Oh! Yes. Well, I'm sure there's something around the...barn I can...bite...

(*COUNT hastily exits.*)

MINA. Mildred, there will come a time in a young lady's life when...trousers become less important and...young men become... more important...

MILDRED. Mother, I know all about courting.

MINA. Oh! You do?

MILDRED. Yes, mother. I've known about courting for years.

MINA. Oh. And how did you come about this information?

MILDRED. The other children in the graveyard. Like Christine Creature...

MINA. From Black Lagoon Avenue?

MILDRED. Yes. She told me all about courting. She said every year the Creature family swims upstream...

MINA. Well, look at the time! It's almost sunrise!

MILDRED. Don't worry mother. I have no use for courting.

MINA. Oh! Good! I mean, for the moment, good, but later, when you're older, and you want to...swim upstream...you can...we can talk about...

MILDRED. Are we done mother?

MINA. *(Relieved:)* Oh, yes, could we be?

MILDRED. I'm off to explore the swamp!

(MILDRED exits.)

MINA. Oh, good. I have just enough time to paint the barn before dinner! *(Perfect housewife take.)*

(MINA exits.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrating:)* Years passed, and the girls grew to marrying age. Word of their beauty spread, and suitors were drawn to the castle like bees to honey. That's a metaphor!

ACTOR. *(Off:)* Simile!

MRS. ARTSMORE. That's a simile!

(MADELINE, now 18, enters and sits to one side of the drawing room. She reads a book. SUITOR #1 enters and kneels at her feet.)

SUITOR #1. My dearest Madeline, might I interest you in my hand in marriage and these property developments near the outskirts of

the village? On my honor, the reports of quicksand in the area are greatly exaggerated...

MADLINE. Next!

(SUITOR #1 exits.)

(MILDRED, now 17, enters and sits to the other side of the drawing room. SUITOR #2 enters and kneels at her feet.)

SUITOR #2. Mildred, you're so beautiful. I can't wait for my mother to start picking out your clothes, like she does for me every morning...

MILDRED. Next!

(SUITOR #2 exits.)

(SUITOR #3 [played by the actor playing SUITOR #1 in a quick change bit] enters and woos MADLINE.)

SUITOR #3. And that's how I learned to drink hog's milk straight from the tap, if ya know what I mean...

MADLINE. Next!

(SUITOR #4 [played by the actor playing SUITOR #2 in a quick change bit] enters with a large suitcase. He presents himself to MILDRED.)

SUITOR #4. And if you accept this marriage proposal in the next thirty minutes, you will receive this authentic imitation diamond engagement ring. But that's not all! *(Opens suitcase.)* You will also receive this complete set of cast iron pots and pans...

MILDRED. Next!

(SUITOR #5 [played by actor playing SUITOR #1] enters with a bowl of food and a spoon. He tries to feed MADLINE.)

SUITOR #5. And here comes the choo-choo...

MADLINE. Next!

(SUITOR #6 [played by actor playing SUITOR #2] enters.)

SUITOR #6. *(To MRS. ARTSMORE:)* We don't have many more costumes back there. You want to wrap this up?

(MADELINE and MILDRED exit.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrates:)* After many, many more young men called on the Dracula's castle, two were chosen. Madeline was quite smitten with Humphrey English, who she put thru a constant regime of tasks and trials, all to prove his love for her.

(Setting: porch.)

(MADELINE enters, carrying a frilly parasol in one hand, pursued by HUMPHREY, who has a slight limp. They playfully chase each other.)

HUMPHREY. I'm chasing you!

MADELINE. Keep chasing me!

HUMPHREY. I'm still chasing you!

MADELINE. Please keep chasing me!

HUMPHREY. Chasing, chasing, chasing!

MADELINE. *(Sudden change:)* Oh, do stop chasing me!

HUMPHREY. You could run more freely without that ever-present parasol, Madeline. My courting would be a much more evenly matched pursuit!

MADELINE. Dearest Humphrey, you know my skin is sensitive to the sunlight. Were I to expose my tender flesh to those punishing rays, more than my heart would be aflame.

(MADELINE turns her back on HUMPHREY, putting the parasol between them.)

HUMPHREY. I don't care! I'll kiss you anyway, letting my lips melt away from the heat.

(HUMPHREY kisses the parasol as if he is kissing MADELINE. She pulls it away when she realizes what he is doing.)

MADELINE. Mr. English, I can't very well just let you rush at my lips with abandon. I read in "Tips for Young Ladies" by Edgar

Allan Poe that you must make a young man work for your affection, for love that isn't earned will prove to be fleeting at best. I'm afraid you haven't earned my heart, and I must set you free.

HUMPHREY. Haven't earned your heart? Haven't I done everything you've asked, no matter how utterly grotesque or fantastic?

MADELINE. Perhaps.

HUMPHREY. Didn't I filch that bouquet of flowers for you from the fruit stand as requested?

MADELINE. Yes...

HUMPHREY. Didn't I let that carriage roll over my foot as you dared?

MADELINE. Yes...

HUMPHREY. And didn't I eat not one, but two earthworms out of the bait pail to prove I was more man than fish?

MADELINE. Yes, Humphrey, you performed every deed I've asked of you. But there is one more that I must request. A rite of manhood that will prove to me that you are, indeed, my most suited suitor.

HUMPHREY. And that would be?

MADELINE. Let me smash your hand with this hammer!

(MADELINE reveals the hammer she's been holding. HUMPHREY gulps and cautiously extends his hand.)

HUMPHREY. *(Nervously:)* Whatever you wish...

MADELINE. Oh, Humphrey, I think I may be in love with you!

(MADELINE raises the hammer high above her head. MADELINE and HUMPHREY freeze, then exit after the light change.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Mildred, the other daughter, was less than enthusiastic with her pursuers.

(Setting: swamp.)

(MILDRED, wearing men's trousers, carrying a bait bucket, fishing pole and manly umbrella, stomps in. BERTRAM follows her, making a great show of "chasing" her. He is forced to pursue, then retreat, several times to avoid "catching" her and ruining the game.)

BERTRAM. I'm chasing you! I'm going to catch you! Here I come!

MILDRED. Why in the world would you chase me? I'm standing right here.

BERTRAM. I'm getting closer! Careful, or I'll catch you then I'll have my way with you!

(He grabs at her. She shoves the bait bucket into his hands.)

MILDRED. Have your way with these annelidae. They're lonely.

BERTRAM. *(Gagging:)* Anneli—?

MILDRED. Annelidae. Earthworms.

BERTRAM. Why on earth would you have a bucket of earthworms?

MILDRED. You asked me to go fishing with you. I brought bait. Here, put one on your hook.

(She holds out the hook and a worm. BERTRAM gags with revulsion. MILDRED and BERTRAM freeze, then exit after the light change.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrates:)* The Draculas were desperate to have their daughters marry. So they entertained suitors in their castle by the sea many evenings each week.

(Setting: dining room.)

(RENFIELD sets up the long table in the drawing room area.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. BRING IN *(Realizes the scene has been set:)* ...Oh. Thank you. Very nice. *(Narrating:)* Renfield, rescued from the local sanitarium, now served as the Draculas' butler.

(RENFIELD enters. We hear a fly "buzzzzz." RENFIELD snatches the fly from the air and eats him. He rings the dinner bell.)

RENFIELD. Breakfast is served!

(DRACULA, MINA, MADELINE *[carrying a book]*, MILDRED *[carrying a dirty spade]*, HUMPHREY, and BERTRAM enter and sit down at the dinner table. As they sit, RENFIELD enters with silverware, which he drops in a clump in front of them.)

MINA. Humphrey, Bertram, welcome to our home!

BERTRAM. Breakfast? Why, it's almost seven o'clock in the evening!

DRACULA. I'm a late riser.

MINA. Books and dirty shovels are not allowed at the dinner table.

MADLINE. But I'm almost finished with the latest tale from up and coming romance novelist H.P. Lovecraft!

MINA. Not at the table.

(MADLINE and MILDRED put their book and shovel aside. RENFIELD enters and drops plates of food in front of each guest.)

MINA. What is for breakfast, Renfield?

RENFIELD. Steak tartar, madam.

BERTRAM. Raw meat for breakfast?

HUMPHREY. Oh, do stop grouching, Bertram. You'll make the Draculas think you aren't smitten with their daughter. *(Makes a big show of smelling the food.)* Mmmmmmmmm. This smells delicious! If I may be so bold, perhaps it could use just a dash more garlic?

(COUNT *[hissing]*, MINA, MILDRED, MADELINE, and RENFIELD *[who pops in from offstage]* all react with disgust.)

HUMPHREY. Salt! Did I say garlic? Salt. I meant salt. Salt, salt, salt! *(To audience:)* Interesting. Perhaps the rumors in the village are true!

MINA. The Count has a rather delicate palate.

DRACULA. So, Humphram, Bertrey. What brings you to our daughters' door?

HUMPHREY. The list is as long as the stars.

(Everyone at the table stares at HUMPHREY in confusion, then turns to each other.)

MINA. I don't think I get that.

ALL (EXCEPT HUMPHREY). *(To each other:)* As long as the stars? I'm not sure I understand that. How long are the stars? Is that a list that measures the same distance as from the Earth to the stars? Or is it a list that includes all the stars? Etc...

HUMPHREY. Meaning her beauty, her talent—

MADELINE. Have a bite of my steak tartar—

HUMPHREY. Her kindness—

(MADELINE feeds HUMPHREY a bite. He gags a bit.)

HUMPHREY. Does steak tartar traditionally have insects in it?

MINA. Insects in the steak? I apologize profusely, Mr. English. That's Renfield's plate.

(RENFIELD races in and switches plates, then exits.)

DRACULA. And Bertrey? How could you possibly be interested in Mildred?

BERTRAM. My father is forcing me...to see her beauty, talent and kindness. *(He awkwardly takes MILDRED's hand and holds it.)*

DRACULA. I see. Mildred, Madeline, excuse yourself from the table so I may have a word with your suitors.

MILDRED and MADELINE. But father!

(Music cue: Count's hypnotic underscore.)

DRACULA. Flee from this place, or the darkness of a thousand nights will crush you under its weight!

MILDRED and MADELINE. Fine!

(MILDRED and MADELINE stomp off.)

MINA. I'll leave you to your conversation. I need to go knit those sweaters for the sheep! *(Perfect housewife take.)*

(MINA exits. BERTRAM and HUMPHREY wait nervously for a few awkward moments as the COUNT gathers his thoughts. Then--)

BERTRAM. Mr. Count...

DRACULA. Silence! Do you...mortals...know...

(COUNT gestures at the men, who are instantly hypnotized, frozen in place.)

(Music cue: Count's hypnotic underscore.)

DRACULA. ...who I am?

BERTRAM and HUMPHREY. *(Unison:)* Yes...

DRACULA. Are you aware of the power I possess?

BERTRAM and HUMPHREY. *(Unison:)* Yes...

DRACULA. Sit down!

BERTRAM and HUMPHREY. *(Unison:)* Don't mind if I do...

(BERTRAM and HUMPHREY sink into their chairs. COUNT moves behind HUMPHREY.)

DRACULA. Pathetic creatures! Lovers of the mediocre! Reeking with the stench of human folly! Unworthy of marrying a goat!

(COUNT gestures at BERTRAM and HUMPHREY.)

BERTRAM and HUMPHREY. *(Unison:)* Baaaaa...

DRACULA. Welcome to living death!!

(COUNT leans down to bite HUMPHREY. MILDRED and MADELINE enter.)

MADELINE. Father!

(COUNT jumps up. HUMPHREY and BERTRAM instantly come out of their trance. The music stops. COUNT immediately hustles the confused BERTRAM and HUMPHREY out the door.)

DRACULA. And in summation, after much investigation, it appears that Francis Bacon actually wrote the complete works of William Shakespeare. Who knew? Have a good evening, gentlemen.

The Countess and I look forward to further visits. Please pass our good wishes on to your families. Good evening.

(COUNT shoves the men out the door.)

MADLINE. Father, you were trying to drain the life's blood out of our potential fiancés!

DRACULA. I wasn't "draining." I was "drinking." There's a difference.

MADLINE. You're trying to keep us from getting married! Mildred, say something!

MILDRED. Oh, father... Thank you!

(MILDRED hugs the COUNT.)

MADLINE. "Thank you"?

MILDRED. I don't want to get married!

DRACULA. Now, now. I understand Bertram is a bit deliciously, er, decidedly awkward...

MILDRED. It's not Bertram. I don't think I want to get married at all!

DRACULA. What? Nonsense!

MADLINE. She spends more time with that bug collection than Bertram. Perhaps she should marry it!

MILDRED. Perhaps I should!

MADLINE. Is there any reason this insect collection and this woman should not be wed in holy matrimony? Oh, that's right, the groom is a bug collection, and that would be ridiculous!

MILDRED. Father!

DRACULA. Silence!

(COUNT gestures at the two young ladies, who just cross their arms and roll their eyes.)

DRACULA. Are you aware...of the power...

COUNT, MILDRED, and MADELINE. ...I possess.

DRACULA. Ah, yes. Well. Anyway. Mildred, we will discuss this later. Retire to your tombs so your mother and I may enjoy our after breakfast nightcap.

MILDRED and MADELINE. But father!

DRACULA. Look into my eyes and OBEY! Away with you both!

(MILDRED and MADELINE make a show of pretending to be hypnotized while they exit.)

MADELINE and MILDRED. *(Faking:)* Yes, father...

(MINA enters with a birdhouse. RENFIELD enters in the background and begins breaking down the dining room table.)

MINA. Husband, I was building bird houses out of old railroad ties, *(Perfect housewife take.)* and I heard you hypnotizing our daughters. Is everything all right?

DRACULA. Attempting to hypnotize them. They are so strong willed. Sometimes I just want to put them outside without their parasols and be done with it!

MINA. Oh, now, Count. If they burst into piles of ash, there would be many fewer suitors at our door.

DRACULA. Which would suit Mildred just fine. Tonight she announced she didn't want to get married!

MINA. Not get married? That's quite ridiculous. Perhaps not with Bertram, but she's young. Someday she'll find the man for her.

DRACULA. Yes, in a pile of rotting garbage next to the mealworms. That girl is touched!

MINA. Now, now. It's not where you find your beloved, it's whether or not they're right for you. Remember when Victor Frankenstein created the Bride for the Monster from body parts of deceased women in the village? Everyone said it wouldn't last, and now five years later they've built a family all their own.

DRACULA. As always, you're correct. You would think after walking the earth for over two hundred years I would have learned something about love.

(MINA gives COUNT a kiss. A wolf howls in the distance.)

MINA. I'd almost forgotten! It's a full moon tonight. Why don't we go over to the Wolfram's for a bit. They're always up for entertaining when the moon is full.

DRACULA. But I'm still famished. That steak tartar only whet my appetite.

MINA. We'll stop by the rabbit hutch and get you a snack. Come, let's go!

(COUNT and MINA exit. MILDRED enters carrying her bug collection.)

MILDRED. Renfield! Renfield, come out here at once!

(RENFIELD enters.)

MILDRED. Yes, Miss Mildred.

MILDRED. *(Holds out box.)* Renfield, what is this?

RENFIELD. A box, Miss.

MILDRED. *(Opens the box.)* What kind of box? *(She shakes it for emphasis.)*

RENFIELD. An...empty box.

MILDRED. An empty box! And previous to this box's empty classification, what did this box hold?

RENFIELD. Oh...

MILDRED. Think hard, Renfield.

RENFIELD. Well...

MILDRED. Yes?

RENFIELD. Could it have been...?

MILDRED. Yes?

RENFIELD. Your insect...

MILDRED. My insect collection!! And where might those insects be found now? Hmmm?

RENFIELD. I... I don't know, Miss.

MILDRED. You don't know. You haven't a clue? Not the tiniest inkling where they might have gone? Not the slightest hint you could give me?

RENFIELD. No, Miss.

MILDRED. How did they taste?

RENFIELD. Delicious!

MILDRED. Aha! Renfield, I have told you countless times—DO NOT EAT MY INSECT COLLECTION!!! Do you realize how long it took me to gather each of those specimens? I ought to cut you open and pull them out of your stomach myself!

(MILDRED grabs a letter opener and threatens RENFIELD. She chases him around the room.)

RENFIELD. Miss Mildred! Stop! Help!

MILDRED. I'm warning you, Renfield! Next time I might not be so nice about it! Next time I'll pin you to the board!

(MILDRED stabs the knife into the table, where it sticks. She exits.)

RENFIELD. *(Smitten:)* She drives me crazy! Er!

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrates:)* Love is in the air! The young ladies are being pursued with vigor by their suitors. But all is not well in the land of love. There are snakes afoot! Snakes that would tiptoe into the fields of amore and wrap themselves around love and squeeze it to death! Snakes that would leave a poor woman of a certain age alone, with debts against her property. Snakes that, given the opportunity, would ruin the life of a beautiful woman, cursing her with reluctance in opening herself up to the affections of men. Snakes! Evil, love-crushing snakes. Do you hear me, Mr. Gregory Artsmore, formerly of Mr. and MRS. Artsmore? Until a mere scullery maid transformed you into a wretched, sorrow-

inducing snake! I WILL BE VINDICATED AGAINST SNAKES!!!!
(*A beat.*) Back to our story. Madeline and Humphrey find themselves under the moonlight on the porch.

(Setting: porch.)

(MADELINE, carrying a stick, and HUMPHREY, wearing an eye patch, enter with their "I'm chasing you!" trot.)

HUMPHREY. Why yes, I do think two eyes is a burden where one will do. And thanks to that well-positioned stick, I'll have the opportunity to find out for myself.

MADELINE. Humphrey, you are a dear. And I think you just might have proven your love for me.

HUMPHREY. Yes?

MADELINE. Oh, yes. And I think, I just might, perhaps, let you kiss me under the stars this fine evening.

HUMPHREY. Truly?

MADELINE. Quite!

HUMPHREY. Oh, Madeline, you've made me the happiest man alive!

MADELINE. Shall we proceed now?

HUMPHREY. Yes, please!

(They move together and embrace. HUMPHREY places the slightest of pecks on MADELINE's lips, then jerks back quickly.)

HUMPHREY. Ouch! Madeline, you've bitten me on the lip!

MADELINE. Nonsense. You've just cut yourself on my higher-than-average cheekbones.

HUMPHREY. I'm bleeding!

(MADELINE's attitude changes. She becomes obsessed with the blood.)

MADELINE. You know...I really shouldn't...but...how about another kiss!

MRS. ARTSMORE. Cue the aforementioned snake!

(MADELINE freezes. HUMPHREY addresses the audience.)

HUMPHREY. I must find out if the Count is truly a vampire as the villagers attest. If tis true, a kiss on the lips under the moonlight now, then a stake in her father's heart after the wedding. Madeline will inherit everything, and then suffer an unfortunate fate on the sunny beaches of Transylvania! *(He turns back to MADELINE.)* Let's play that game again?

MADELINE. Where I chase you, catch you, *(Attitude change:)* then lick the blood off your lips? *(Back to sweet:)* I mean, chase you?

HUMPHREY. Yes, that one! Catch me!

(HUMPHREY runs off with MADELINE in hot pursuit.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Meanwhile, in the muddy fields outside the castle, love is in the air.

(MRS. ARTSMORE swats a mosquito.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Or is that malaria? Fever, chills, headache, perspiration, fatigue, nausea and vomiting. No matter, the effects are the same!

(Setting: swamp.)

(MILDRED, carrying a shovel and a bucket, enters followed by BERTRAM.)

BERTRAM. But I don't understand why we're spending yet another evening in the swamp.

MILDRED. Because Renfield ate my insect collection, which means I must start over. I'd suggest putting on some wading boots if you'd like to woo me properly.

BERTRAM. Mildred, I have every intention of wooing your properly. However, I will not woo a bucket of nightcrawlers.

MILDRED. I find insects to be more beautiful than most humans.

(MILDRED pulls out a fearsome looking bug.)

MILDRED. *(Suddenly in love:)* What other creature could live under a rock in a marsh and emerge looking as exquisite as this? *(As if the bug is talking to her:)* What? Why, yes! Yes, you may kiss me!

(MILDRED turns from the audience to kiss the bug, then freezes. BERTRAM gags, and turns to speak to the audience.)

BERTRAM. The horror of this life! Forced to court a lady gravedigger by my father. Why? To raise our family station, which is apparently lower than a family with a patriarch who drinks blood, sleeps in a coffin and transforms into a carrier of rabies! *(To MRS. ARTSMORE:)* You did this to me!

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Magnanimously:)* You're quite welcome.

(MILDRED unfreezes, recovers from her kiss. She hands the bug to BERTRAM who gags.)

MILDRED. Hold this. I want to dig over near the manure piles.

(MILDRED exits. BERTRAM gags as he walks off.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrating:)* Weeks passed, the young men continued to fend off pokes to the eye and buckets of maggots in pursuit of the young ladies. However, one evening, Madeline was to discover treachery in the garden of love!

(Setting: drawing room.)

(MADELINE is in the drawing room reading. HUMPHREY enters.)

HUMPHREY. Madeline, I'm here— *(Panicked:)* Madeline, don't move! You have something on you!

MADELINE. What? Where?

HUMPHREY. There! On your hand!

MADELINE. This? Humphrey, this is a book!

HUMPHREY. Exactly! Quickly, toss it to me!

(MADELINE tosses the book to HUMPHREY. He catches it and throws it out the window.)

MADELINE. Humphrey!

HUMPHREY. There! Much better.

MADLINE. Humphrey, what are you doing?

HUMPHREY. There, there, Madeline. That horrible (*Disgusted at the word:*) book won't bother you again.

MADLINE. But Humphrey, I like books.

HUMPHREY. But they're so full of...knowledge.

MADLINE. I know! I like to learn. I'm going to go to university to study in the Fall.

HUMPHREY. Well, I guess that means you don't have much faith in my courting skills.

MADLINE. How do you mean?

HUMPHREY. I do mean that if I am victorious in my (*Evil:*) pursuit of your fortune—

MADLINE. My fortune?

HUMPHREY. Fortunate enough to win your hand in marriage, there will be no need for university.

MADLINE. You're serious.

HUMPHREY. As a (*Evil:*) stake thru the heart.

MADLINE. What?

HUMPHREY. Cross my heart.

MADLINE. You expect me to put my education aside for you?

HUMPHREY. Just until I (*Evil:*) dispatch your father.

MADLINE. What?

HUMPHREY. Ask your father's permission. To marry you.

MADLINE. My father may give you his permission, but I may withhold mine, Mr. English.

HUMPHREY. Madeline, please! I've done everything you've asked of me! My heart is bursting with love for you! It would be cruel to (*Evil:*) deny me your inheritance.

MADLINE. I heard that one! You said inherit...

(HUMPHREY quickly pricks his palm with the letter opener and shows her the blood.)

MADLINE. *(Hypnotized:)* —blood...you said blood...

(HUMPHREY waves the bloodied hand around, leading her gaze.)

HUMPHREY. Are we sincerely going to let something as trivial as your education come between us?

(MADLINE grabs his palm and greedily sucks the blood off it as she speaks.)

MADLINE. I'm unsure. Leave me for the moment. I have some thinking to do. I'll summon you back to the castle.

HUMPHREY. Yes, my dearest. *(Tries to pull away.)* I'll leave you to your thoughts. *(Tries to pull away. Re: His wrist:)* I'll need to take that with me.

MADLINE. Must you? Oh, yes. Be gone!

(HUMPHREY exits.)

MADLINE. There's something about Mr. English that is very...scrumptious. Suspicious! Suspicious. *(Discovers book on table:)* I'll take a cue from Mr. Sherlock Holmes and investigate thoroughly!

(MADLINE exits.)

(Setting: swamp.)

(MILDRED and BERTRAM enter. MILDRED carries a bucket of fish. She takes out a knife and prepares to clean a fish.)

MILDRED. You just take the knife, cut the fish from end to end, pull out the intestines... *(She pulls out the intestines.)*

BERTRAM. I'm going to be sick...

MILDRED. And you're done.

BERTRAM. What do you do with...that?

MILDRED. *(Holds the intestines in front of his face.)* The insides? You discard them.

(RENFIELD appears.)

RENFIELD. *(Hungriily:)* I'll take those, miss.

(RENFIELD grabs the intestines and quickly exits. MILDRED hands BERTRAM the knife.)

MILDRED. Here.

BERTRAM. You must be joking.

MILDRED. You catch a fish, you clean a fish. Get to work.

(BERTRAM gingerly takes a fish out of the bucket. He tries to cut it, but can't.)

BERTRAM. It's looking at me!

(BERTRAM closes his eyes and stabs down into the fish. He cuts his hand instead.)

BERTRAM. Ow! I've cut my hand!

(RENFIELD immediately reappears. He and MILDRED are hypnotized by the blood. MILDRED grabs BERTRAM's hand.)

MILDRED. First...you catch it...then you...clean it...

(MILDRED sucks at the blood on BERTRAM's hand. RENFIELD grabs the fish and the knife and begins cleaning the fish. He and MILDRED lock eyes as BERTRAM squirms between them.)

RENFIELD. I'll clean it, Miss Mildred!

BERTRAM. Uh...yes, well...this has been amusing...but I have to...run away now.

(BERTRAM exits. MILDRED and RENFIELD have a moment, then both instantly pop out of their trance.)

MILDRED. Renfield, gather up these fish and bring them in to the kitchen! And don't leave all the intestines just lying around.

(MILDRED exits. RENFIELD happily scoops up the fish and entrails and follows.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Our lovers' paths are too narrow. We need a scene here of complication. I have it! *(Back to narrating:)* Unbeknownst to our young lovers, a complication! Renfield!

(Setting: drawing room.)

(RENFIELD enters.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Renfield, a lowly, disgusting, pathetic, sad, tormented, broken, wretch of a man...

RENFIELD. I'm standing right here...

MRS. ARTSMORE. ...found himself in love with his master's daughter. At wit's end, he sought the advice of the young, but wise, maid. Send in the French maid!

(STAGE MANAGER pops his/her head out. Note: This could be done by one of the other cast members instead.)

STAGE MANAGER. We don't have enough cast members for someone to play the maid.

MRS. ARTSMORE. Me? Play the French maid! I couldn't possibly!

(MRS. ARTSMORE whips out a maid's cap and puts it on. She plays the scene with a French accent.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Renfield, why are you so despondent?

RENFIELD. Oh, the French maid, I find myself in a predicament worthy of Shakespeare.

MRS. ARTSMORE. Perhaps I can help you, for I am very wise.

RENFIELD. But you are so young. How could you possibly know the troubles of love?

MRS. ARTSMORE. Although I am but seventeen years of age... *(Glares at audience:)* ...nineteen years of age... *(To audience:)* Look, play along or I'll turn this into Greek tragedy and we'll be here all night. Although I am but twenty-one years of age, I am well versed in *Langue de l'amour*.

RENFIELD. Very well. I am in love with one of Count Dracula's daughters.

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(She says the word:)* Gasp! Renfield! That's unheard of!

RENFIELD. I'm tormented by my heart! Her subtle gait as she trudges thru the marsh. Her womanly figure in men's trousers. *(Does the "women's curves" hand motion, except without the curves.)* Her delicate touch as she dissects wildlife. How could any man be immune to these subtle charms?

MRS. ARTSMORE. Renfield, you must get ahold of yourself. The Count will go mad if he sees you mooning about. It will be back to the sanitarium for you!

RENFIELD. What am I to do?

MRS. ARTSMORE. Servants lusting after the misses in the house is strictly forbidden. But if you must continue on this path, my advice would be to show her that you care in a way no one else could. Make yourself unique in your pursuit of her. If you can prove to the Count and Countess you are worthy of their daughter's affections, then maybe, just maybe, they will consent to give you her hand in marriage.

RENFIELD. I know just the thing! Oh, thank you, the French maid!

(RENFIELD exits.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. *(Narrating:)* As one love affair veers off the path into the unknown, so does the other.

(MRS. ARTSMORE steps aside. MADELINE enters the drawing room reading a book. She sits.)

MADLINE. *(Reading:)* "Those of the criminal mind require constant challenges against which they must resist revealing their ulterior motives. It is pleasurable to them. Thus, a suspect alone is a suspect with no such barriers, and further thus will reveal their true nature thusly." I must say, "Inside the Mind of the Killer" by Miss Charlotte Bronte is quite informative!

HUMPHREY. *(Offstage:)* Madeline!

MADELINE. What a perfectly timed opportunity! I will observe Humphrey alone, and pray that my suspicions are incorrect! Where to hide, where to hide...

(MADELINE searches the room for a hiding place. She finally decides on hiding behind a single flower in a vase [or a candlestick, or some other ridiculous piece of the set that doesn't hide her at all]. HUMPHREY enters the drawing room. Although he stands right next to her, searching, he doesn't see MADELINE.)

HUMPHREY. Madeline? I'm here! Madeline? Hello? *(Pause.)* Alone in the castle at last!

(HUMPHREY searches thru drawers and cabinets.)

HUMPHREY. There must be something here to prove the Count is indeed a vampire.

(MINA enters the drawing room. She has vines in her hair, and carries a basket of same.)

MINA. May I ask what you're doing?

HUMPHREY. Searching for clues! Wait...

MINA. Clues for...?

HUMPHREY. Your husband's hellish origins. Wait...

MINA. My husband's...?

HUMPHREY. How long have you and the Count been married?

MINA. Just over nineteen years. And I have to apologize. I must look a fright. I was out harvesting the deadly nightshade. *(Perfect housewife take.)*

HUMPHREY. Having never been married myself, I must admit I'm a bit overwhelmed by the prospect. What challenges have you and the Count had to overcome in your marriage?

MINA. Oh, the usual. We had to make sure all the sharp, wooden objects were removed from the castle—pencils, toothpicks. No white picket fence for me! The Count has a very specific diet—all red meat, no spicy dishes like roasted garlic, garlic toast, garlic mashed potatoes, garlic bananas foster...

HUMPHREY. Got it.

MINA. The Count is not a church-goer, per se. So no crosses in the castle. Which makes tic-tac-toe a challenge.

HUMPHREY. I see.

MINA. I must leave you now. The horses aren't going to shoe themselves, and why buy expensive horse shoes when you can make your own? (*Perfect housewife take.*) I will send Madeline out as soon as I find her.

HUMPHREY. Good day, madam.

(*MINA exits.*)

HUMPHREY. Sharp objects! Garlic! Crosses! It's true! The Count is a vampire! A creature belched forth from the grave! Hooray!

(*HUMPHREY exits. MADELINE comes out from her hiding place.*)

MADELINE. Oh, Humphrey! You've betrayed me! How could you?! Miss Madeline Dracula will not be crisscrossed! Mark my words, Mr. Humphrey English—revenge is sweet! And I love desert!

(*MADELINE exits.*)

MRS. ARTSMORE. (*Narrates:*) As one romance unravels like a well-worn sweater, another blooms like a...new sweater.

(*Setting: swamp.*)

(*MILDRED is digging worms. RENFIELD enters.*)

RENFIELD. Miss Mildred, I have a gift for you.

MILDRED. A gift? For me? But you're the help.

(*RENFIELD hands her a box. She opens it. This scene becomes a clichéd movie romance.*)

MILDRED. It's an insect collection!

RENFIELD. And I didn't even eat one of them!

MILDRED. Renfield, that is very sweet of you.

RENFIELD. Oh, Miss Mildred, you're sweeter than any centipede that has crawled 'neath a muddy stone.

MILDRED. Renfield!

RENFIELD. It's true!

MILDRED. Renfield, I must know what your intentions are! Are you wooing me?

RENFIELD. Miss Mildred, you're every kind of lady a young man could want.

MILDRED. Renfield, what do you know of ladies? You've spent most of your adult life in a sanitarium!

RENFIELD. A sanitarium with a women's wing! With ladies of every kind! Schizophrenics, the demonically possessed, lycanthropes. And you're prettier than every one!

MILDRED. You do know how to flatter a lady. But no, I'm not to be married! Regardless of my parents' wishes, I want neither Bertram nor any other fiancé!

RENFIELD. But why, Miss Mildred?

MILDRED. Why? Why would any woman want to enter into a union that stripped her of any pleasures or pastimes that didn't meet the requirements of her betrothed? I'm not soon to find a man who will crawl through the swamp in search of leeches. *(She looks at RENFIELD for a moment.)* Oh. *(Suddenly stern.)* Renfield, leave this swamp at once! You have no business in here!

RENFIELD. Yes, Miss Mildred!

(RENFIELD exits hastily.)

MILDRED. How dare he live up to my expectations!

(MILDRED exits.)

MRS. ARTSMORE. Oooh, this is so exciting! This love story has taken on a life of its own!

(Setting: drawing room.)

(HUMPHREY is waiting. MADELINE enters carrying a large magnifying glass and holding a pipe.)

HUMPHREY. There you are! I've been waiting here for over thirty seconds— Wait. Why are you carrying that magnifying glass and smoking that pipe?

MADELINE. I've been reading quite a bit of Sherlock Holmes.

HUMPHREY. You have, have you?

MADELINE. Yes. And I've decided I want to study science and criminology at university, and then become a lady private investigator.

HUMPHREY. A private investigator?! How droll! *(He laughs heartily.)*

MADELINE. Don't laugh!

(HUMPHREY shuts up instantly.)

MADELINE. I've privately investigated many things of late. I have a natural talent, and with a university background...

HUMPHREY. And what makes you think you can actually accomplish this? When we're married, I'll expect you to tend to the home. This is an enormous castle, and—

MADELINE. This castle?

HUMPHREY. Er, yes. This. Of course we won't be living here, but I'd like to believe we'd have one that's comparable some day.

MADELINE. I see. In light of this, I propose an agreement. One last test of your love for me. An agreement we enter into before our nuptials.

HUMPHREY. An agreement entered into before our nuptials? Prenuptial? Between husband and wife? Unheard of.

MADELINE. Never the less, I propose one. If I can privately detect three things about you that are true, I will go to university and study. If any one of these three things is untrue, a dutiful wife I will be.

HUMPHREY. *(Laughs.)* You're mad.

MADLINE. As a hatter.

HUMPHREY. All right, I'm game. Begin the private detecting!

(MADLINE takes HUMPHREY's hands in hers.)

MADLINE. First, you've been carving wood. You have splinters in your hands.

HUMPHREY. Oh, yes. Very true. I was doing some wood working recently. Yes. One down.

MADLINE. Second, your name isn't "Humphrey English." If you rearranged the letters of "English," you come up with "Helsing" as in "Van Helsing"!

HUMPHREY. Oh, yes. Well. That's a coincidence. Isn't it?

MADLINE. And third, you're here to kill my father and inherit the family fortune!

HUMPHREY. Madeline, that's preposterous!

MADLINE. Is it? *(Grabs his traveling bag.)* Let us inventory the contents of your traveling bag, shall we? Holy water, garlic cloves, a mallet, and a wooden stake.

(MADLINE pulls out a bottle of holy water, garlic cloves, a mallet and a stake.)

HUMPHREY. Er, well, that can all be explained. The holy water is quite refreshing during the long carriage ride to the castle. And the garlic is a natural cure for the common cold, of which I *(Cough cough)* seem to be suffering of late. That is not a stake. That is a pencil. *(Takes stake and a piece of paper, begins to "write":)* With which I will write a note. "Remember to tell Madeline how beautiful she is today." And to remember how much I love you, I dot the "i" in "Madeline" with a heart.

(MADLINE holds up the mallet.)

MADLINE. And this?

HUMPHREY. Um... Happy Birthday! Did the bow fall off that mallet? I told that salesman to secure the wrapping tightly as I had to travel a great distance to—

MADLINE. Enough! You've lied to me for the last time, Humphrey! Shall we play that game again?

HUMPHREY. The one where you chase me then smash me over the head with that mallet until I'm dead?

MADLINE. Correct!

(MADLINE raises the mallet to hit HUMPHREY. HUMPHREY grabs her and they tussle.)

HUMPHREY. Quiet, girl! Your father is an abomination! I'm here to rid the world of his stench! And his bank account of the evil money that lies therein, which I will put into my own, not evil account, and spend on non-evil items, thus stimulating the local economy!

(MADLINE overpowers HUMPHREY, pinning him to the sofa with his arm behind his back.)

HUMPHREY. Ow! Ow! Ow!

(COUNT, MINA, MILDRED, and BERTRAM enter.)

MINA. Madeline, stop flirting with the boy! He's already agreed to marry you!

MADLINE. He's not here to marry me! He's here to destroy father! He only courted me to gain entrance into our family for the purposes of destroying us from within!

COUNT, MINA, BERTRAM, and MILDRED. *(Unison, say the word:)* Gasp!

MADLINE. I will not marry you, Mr. Helsing! Get out! Get out of our castle!

(MADLINE releases HUMPHREY, who leaps up and backs away.)

HUMPHREY. I will leave! But I will be back! *(To COUNT:)* You, foul monster of the underworld! You, destroyer of souls! You, evil

incarnate! I will return, in my uncle's name, to send you back into the grave where you belong!

DRACULA. *(A beat.)* Oh, I'm sorry. Was that for me? I just realized... *(Pulls crossword and pencil out from under his cape:)* "Liquid diet," ten letters. "HEMOGLOBIN." I've been trying to figure that one out all day. So, where were we? Oh, yes... *(Once again menacing:)* LEAVE THIS HOUSE, MORTAL FOOL! Never to return!

HUMPHREY. I will return, and you will be driven BACK TO THE GRAVE, YOU FOUL BEAST!

(HUMPHREY exits. A beat. HUMPHREY returns.)

HUMPHREY. I'VE FORGOTTEN MY SCARF!!!

ALL. Get out!

HUMPHREY. *(Quickly:)* Foulmonsterbacktothegrave!

(HUMPHREY exits. A wolf howls in the distance.)

MINA. Say "Hello" to the Wolframs!

DRACULA. The moon is full, which means it is time for luncheon!

MINA. Oh, good, I'll go slaughter a hog! *(Perfect housewife take.)*

BERTRAM. Er, I, too, am here to end this foul imitation of a life!

MILDRED. *(Interrupting:)* Father, I can't marry Bertram!

BERTRAM. Uh, was I talking? I'll just sit here...

MILDRED. For I am...in love with another.

(MILDRED rings dinner bell. RENFIELD enters.)

MILDRED. Against all odds, I, too, have found someone who shares my interests and would rather I not change one thing about myself.

DRACULA. Not one thing?

MILDRED. No!

MADLINE. Not one tiny thing?

MILDRED. No!

MINA. Not even, say, the trousers? Or the—

MILDRED. NO!

MINA. *(A beat.)* Is he blind?

MILDRED. NO!

DRACULA. Well, let us lay eyes on this presumably desperate young gentleman.

MILDRED. He's here.

DRACULA. Renfield, show him in.

MILDRED. No, he's here. In this room. Renfield!

BERTRAM. *(A beat. Bursts out laughing:)* AH HA HA HA HA! *(Tries to cover with crying:)* Uh,... Oh, the villainy! Affection stolen out from under my nose by this thief of love! *(Cries, then suddenly composed.)* I'll see myself out.

(BERTRAM zips out the door. We hear him laughing hysterically offstage.)

MINA. Poor man. He's destroyed.

DRACULA. Renfield?

RENFIELD. Yes, sir?

DRACULA. Do you mean to tell me you intend to marry my daughter?

RENFIELD. If she'll have me.

MADLINE. Hooray! A wedding!

DRACULA. How dare you?! You presume to be worthy of my daughter?! For your insolence I'll drain you of your life force, then have you stuffed and mounted in the Transylvania town square as a warning to all whom would be so foolishly bold!

MADLINE. Hooray! Stuffed and mounted!

(COUNT attacks RENFIELD, biting him on the neck and draining his blood. No one tries to stop him.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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