



Source: Sabrina Tavernise and Robert F. Worth, 'Attacks put Shiites to the test', *New York Times in International Herald Tribune online*, 20/09/05.

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Eve keeps her false teeth in a drawer beside her bed, wrapped in plastic. She hides them because she is afraid that visitors may find them offensive. Or worse, that she may bring a man home one day only to have him run for the door the minute he spies her plastic fangs.

Eve has other secrets too. She has a plastic bloodshot eye that fits onto her face. It slots over her eye socket like a patch and she likes the way it snaps into place as she straps it on.

To the casual observer, Eve's makeup drawer could be typical of a woman who throws nothing out. A nest of stumpy lipsticks and blunt eyeliner pencils in colours that range from vermilion to cobalt blue; forgotten fashions of the past decade perhaps. A handful of half squeezed tubes of face cream, concealer, and a pair of false eyelashes. But what would the casual observer think of the jar of crimson food dye mixed with water and cornflour? Would they know that, when applied correctly, this makes for the perfect mock blood clot?

Each weeknight from Wednesday to Sunday, 6.30 until midnight, Eve calls herself Elvira. On her first day at Dracula's the fat manager had slapped down a photo album and asked her to pick a character.

'So, who do ya wanna be?' he asked, biting into a Chico roll as he flicked through glossy photos. He ate as though he were chewing on gum, smacked his lips and pushed the wad of fried vegetable matter into his cheek. Then he licked the tip of his fat finger, cleaned off the sauce and stabbed at the first photograph.

'Hermione the hunchback, Lilith the she-devil, Sadie the sexy Axe-lady—as you can see her outfit is ah, shall we say, brief...'

'She looks a little cold...' Eve said, eyeing the electric-blue g-string and boa ensemble nervously.

Eve could not picture herself becoming any of the characters that he presented her. She had never worn fishnet stockings, nor had she contemplated squeezing her generous torso into a black velvet corset.

'You want something less risqué?' asked the manager, 'well let me see, we've also got Lurch, but ah, you'd have to be a bit taller to pull that one off...and it's usually a male role.'

The last photo was of a character named Elvira, in a purple cape and knee-high boots. Eve unenthusiastically agreed to try it on and the manager hastily steered her towards the costume room, where she proceeded to get further instructions from a tall lady in a silver cat suit who called herself Jinx. She had white hair and spoke to Eve from behind a sequined mask.

Throughout the tour of the venue and Jinx's careful, though slightly muffled lecture, Eve longed to explain that she was really only here because she had hoped that employment in the 'theatre' industry would bring her

some good contacts for future acting work. Eve wanted to meet other actors, earn a bit of money and build up her portfolio. She was hoping to do some networking. But as she was shaking hands with the greasy paws of the manager, she looked at his half-digested Chico roll and realised that working in a theatre restaurant was not going to be the catalyst for her big break after all. She wanted to tell Jinx all of this from the start but when she looked at the expressionless mask before her the words dried up. And the fact still remained: Eve needed work. So that night Eve became Elvira and bought her first violet coloured lipstick. She told anyone who asked that she had a job waitressing in an Italian restaurant from Wednesdays to Sundays. And she kept her violet lipstick in the drawer.

Eve was not expecting to ever enjoy being Elvira. At first, she had trouble with the glue that fastened her fake eyelashes and she found the high boots gave her blisters. Jinx, whose face Eve had never seen, since she never took off her mask, whispered suggestions in her ear as though they were Government secrets.

'Try this. Two drops. Water. Cornflour,' Jinx said, looking quickly over her shoulder, 'they'll think it's real. Keep it quiet.' At that she disappeared behind the curtain in a flash of silver sequins.

During that first week, Jinx brought Elvira to life and Eve started to look forward to her furtive appearances in the dressing room. She still didn't have the heart to tell her that she was only in it until something better came along.

After two weeks, Eve's toes were developing calluses in the right places and her boots slid on without pain. She gained confidence with the twirl of her cape and learnt how to work the crowd into a fearful frenzy with a ghoulish grimace under the spotlight. She got stabbed to death by a goblin and went down in a cascade of dyed cornflour. She was even congratulated by the manager when, at interval one night, in a moment of inspiration, Eve pulled out the strap-on eye that Jinx had lent her and improvised further bloodshed. A man before her almost choked on his frozen margarita. Eve started collecting more colours of lipstick, experimenting with eye shadow and expanding her repertoire of death.

The whispers from behind the silver mask kept Elvira alive and Eve kept her secrets.

One night, Jinx appeared in Eve's mirror while she was drawing a bleeding wound down the side of her neck with crimson eyeliner. She passed Eve a piece of paper. In the dark, Eve read the heading, 'Auditions' and 'Lady Dracula'. It was for a role with a professional theatre group. Jinx disappeared before Eve could say anything.

That night, Eve slept with her fangs wrapped in plastic beneath her pillow.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Lucy Broome.*