

Vamp Fever

A Dark Comedy
By L.A. Jones

Cast of Characters

<u>LEETA KING:</u>	Lean, energetic woman in late twenties.
<u>CHRISTOPHER KING:</u>	Hardworking professional in early thirties.
<u>FRED:</u>	A dynamic vampire.
<u>DELIVERY MAN #1:</u>	Burly, no-nonsense New Yorker.
<u>DELIVERY MAN #2:</u>	Non-speaking role.

Place

Apartment in NYC

Time

Late 1970s

ACT 1

Scene 1

Setting: Cramped but stylish space. Couch center. Coffee table pushed aside to left. Right of couch, a boombox monopolizes a tiny table. A mirror hangs on wall above. Directly behind, a door leads to the unseen bedroom. Back right, another door, entrance to the apartment. An L-shaped counter separates the living room and entrance from a hinted-at kitchen, upstage left.

At rise: Leeta, in seventies dancewear, a feather boa around her neck, works concentratedly on some dance steps to disco emanating from boombox. Checks out her slow but enthusiastic progress in the mirror. Loud knock at entrance, soundly ignored by Leeta. Knock repeated, louder.

LEETA (switches off radio.)

Who is it?

DELIVERY MAN #1

Special delivery, ma'am. From the pet store.

LEETA (goes to door.)

The pet store?

DELIVERY MAN #1

The pet store.

LEETA

What is it?

DELIVERY MAN #1

It says here, 'exotic animal.'

LEETA

Exotic animal?

DELIVERY MAN #1

Yeah, you know, like a python or something.

LEETA (shrieks.)

Yuck! I detest snakes! The only way I like snakes is sewn into a bag. Is it a bag?

DELIVERY MAN #1 (impatient.)

I don't think so. Says live animal.

LEETA

Live animal?

DELIVERY MAN #1

Lady, I ain't got all day.

(LEETA hesitates then unlocks and opens the door. Enter DELIVERY MAN #1 and DELIVERY MAN #2. They lug in a shiny black coffin.)

DELIVERY MAN #1 (puffing.)

Where do you want this?

LEETA

Oh...there?

(Indicates cleared space in front of couch. DELIVERY MAN #1 and DELIVERY MAN #2 set down coffin.)

LEETA

Is that a coffin?

DELIVERY MAN #1

Don't worry, lady, It's a fad. Everyone gets stuff delivered in coffins these days.

LEETA (brightens.)

Oh!

DELIVERY MAN #1 (looks LEETA up and down.)

Bet you're just the type for snakeskin, too.

LEETA (sincere.)

Oh, thanks.

DELIVERY MAN #1

(Shakes head then pulls paper with pen from pocket.)

Sign here, lady.

(LEETA signs. DELIVERY MAN #1 tears form apart and hands LEETA her copy. Exit DELIVERY MAN #1 and DELIVERY MAN #2.)

LEETA (reads.)

Shady Town Pets. Shady Town Pets? Never heard of it.

(LEETA drops form on coffee table. Sits on couch. Knocks on coffin. Tries lifting lid. It won't budge. LEETA moves to boombox and switches it on loud. Pushed by rhythm, she jumps onto coffin and boogies freely then tosses herself onto couch. Enter CHRIS, upstage, in suit, carrying a briefcase and bouquet. LEETA switches off radio and hurries to CHRIS.)

Christopher!

CHRIS

(Sets briefcase on counter, hands LEETA bouquet and plants kiss on her cheek.

Happy anniversary, sunshine.

LEETA

These are fabulous.

CHRIS

Just wait. I've got an even bigger surprise for you.

(CHRIS exits to bedroom. LEETA carries bouquet to kitchen and reemerges with bouquet in vase. She sets bouquet on coffee table then reconsiders, moves vase to coffin lid and sits on couch admiring bouquet. CHRIS, now dressed in tracksuit, enters from bedroom, right. He sits beside LEETA then immediately jumps up and points at coffin.)

That's it!

LEETA (jumps up.)

What?

CHRIS

Your anniversary present!

LEETA

I know. You just gave them to me.

CHRIS (points at coffin.)

Not the flowers. That.

LEETA (points at coffin.)

That's my present?

CHRIS

Do you like it?

LEETA (shrugs.)

We can use a bigger coffee table, I guess.

CHRIS

Leeta! That was twenty times more expensive than a coffee table.

LEETA

(Snatches up vase. Moves vase to coffee table.)

What is it, Christopher?

CHRIS

You don't know?

LEETA

The delivery man said it was a snake.

CHRIS

A snake? In a coffin? That's hilarious!

LEETA

What is in the coffin, Christopher?

CHRIS

(Moves to briefcase.)

Tell you what. I tried to get the pet store to gift wrap the coffin, but they said it was too big. They did dress up the care instructions, though.

(Unsnaps briefcase. Pulls out envelope with large black bow affixed. Closes and locks briefcase. Moves to stand beside LEETA. Hands her the envelope.)

Ta-dah!

LEETA

(Sinks to couch, not sure whether she's pleased or disturbed. CHRIS sits beside her.)

Thank you, Christopher.

(LEETA opens envelope. Draws out instructions. Reads.)

On the care and feeding of your vampire?

CHRIS (enthusiastic.)

Read the instructions, Leeta.

LEETA (reads.)

One. Keep out of sunlight. Two. Keep away from crosses and garlic. Three. Feed live game regularly.

CHRIS

Isn't that fabulous?

LEETA

I'm not sure. What kind of live game?

CHRIS

Rats, cockroaches, whatever. It's better than having a cat.

LEETA

Are you suggesting we live in a rat's nest?

CHRIS

Of course not. But we live in the Big Apple. Dumpsters abound. And the thing is, Leeta, it's stylish to have one.

LEETA

Really?

CHRIS

Last year it was Dobermans. This year it's vampires. But you've got to know someone.

LEETA

What's that mean?

CHRIS

It means you're lucky to be married to me.

LEETA (forced.)

Freaky deaky.

CHRIS (checks watch.)

The sun sets in an hour. Then we can open your present. You're going to love it.

LEETA

Uh-huh. What about this?

(LEETA reaches under couch to produce a wrapped shoebox and presents it to CHRIS.)

Ta-dah! Happy anniversary, honey.

CHRIS

Thanks, honey.

(CHRIS unwraps box and pulls out a shoe. LEETA claps hands.)

LEETA

Aren't they gorgeous?

CHRIS

Shoes?

LEETA

They're not just shoes. They're boogie shoes. Specially made for you to boogie down in.

CHRIS

Boogie down in?

LEETA

Dance, silly. Here, open your card.

(LEETA reaches into shoe box to pull out envelope.)

Drumroll, please!

(LEETA plays drumroll on coffin lid.)

CHRIS

Leeta! You'll screw up its naptime!

LEETA

It's a vampire, Chris. It's dead.

CHRIS (checks watch.)

Only for a while longer.

LEETA

Open your card.

CHRIS

(Pulls out card and reads.)

To the love of my life on our anniversary. Thanks, sunshine.

LEETA

Inside! See what's inside! I bought us dance lessons at Arthur Murray! Isn't that fab?

CHRIS (tucks card back into box.)

I don't dance, Leeta. I've got two left feet. I thought you knew that.

LEETA

I don't exactly have two right feet. We can learn to dance together. I'm tired of being a closet disco queen. I want to dance the night away. Everyone else is out having fun.

CHRIS

(Replaces shoebox lid firmly. Hands box to LEETA.)

I can't do it, Leeta. I had a traumatic experience with a conga line once.

LEETA

What's that mean?

CHRIS

You know, those long chains of people stepping and kicking in time?

(CHRIS sings.)

Da-da-da-da-da-da! Da-da-da-da-da-da!

LEETA

I know what a conga line is. I want to know why it traumatized you?

CHRIS

I stepped on some lady's ruffles. The whole line went down. Like dominoes.

LEETA

Okay, but we're not talking a conga line and ruffles. We're talking The Bus Stop and satin.

CHRIS

I just can't do it, Leeta. I'll freeze. Solid. Like a bronzed snowman.

LEETA

You'd dance if you loved me.

CHRIS

I'll do anything for you, Leeta, but I won't dance.

LEETA

You don't love me.

CHRIS

If I didn't love you, would I have given you this terrific vampire?

LEETA

Does it dance?

BLACKOUT.

ACT 1
Scene 2

Setting: Same apartment. Coffin now lies atop kitchen counter, stepstool set beside it. A mirror-ball mask lies on couch. Coffee table now set at left end of couch. A trophy stands on table, along with an unused glass and two wine bottles. Lights set low.

At rise: Leeta and Fred, rocking disco outfits, Fred with feather boa, lounge on couch. They share a celebratory toast and drink.

LEETA (puts glass on table.)

Let's do it one more time!

(FRED drains glass. LEETA sets glass on table.)

FRED (rises.)

Out of sight!

(FRED and LEETA dance a few steps skillfully. Finish with a flourish.)

LEETA

Haha! We were good!

FRED

That's no jive talking.

LEETA

What a dance-off! We boogied rings around those other couples.

FRED

That's the lowdown.

LEETA

And we won!

FRED

That's the square biz. Gimme some skin.

(Extends hand to LEETA for a low five.)

LEETA (slaps hand.)

You got it!

FRED (snatches up trophy.)

This dude wants to see how he looks with the prize. Can you dig it?

FRED (Cont.)

(Moves to mirror where he strikes a pose.)

Not bad for three centuries.

LEETA (laughs.)

How do you know? You've got no reflection.

FRED

I've got a feeling.

LEETA

Well, it's the square biz. You look fabulous. Are you really three hundred years old?

FRED

Psyche! I might be closer to three hundred and fifty.

LEETA (awed.)

Three hundred and fifty?

FRED (turns.)

I've had a little work done. I've had a touch of hair dye. I've had veneers.

LEETA

Veneers?

FRED (grins.)

You dig this far out smile?

LEETA

Where are your fangs, Fred?

FRED

Maybe I'll show them to you some night, baby.

LEETA (feigns a shiver.)

Jeepers creepers! If you talk like that, I'm going to...freak out!

FRED (laughs.)

Get your groove on, baby.

(LEETA switches on radio. Disco blares. LEETA and FRED boogie some more. FRED tosses trophy on couch, picks up mask and slips it over LEETA'S head. Enter CHRIS, right, dressed in suit and carrying briefcase. He turns up lights and looks witheringly at LEETA and FRED.)

CHRIS (shouts.)

Good morning!

FRED (still dancing.)

My man!

LEETA (still dancing.)

Hey, babe!

CHRIS

Terrific. I'm married to a disco ball. I don't suppose there's a chance at getting a cup of coffee?

LEETA

Dream on!

(CHRIS switches off radio. LEETA pulls mask from head.)

What's the deal?

CHRIS

The deal is, I'd like a cup of coffee before I go to work. Like in the old days? Before Dracula moved in?

FRED

I've got to call you out, brother. I'm not Dracula. I'm Fred. Man, you're confusing me with my great uncle.

CHRIS

I don't care if I'm confusing you with the Easter Bunny. You're screwing up my life. What a nightmare.

LEETA (snatches up trophy.)

Christopher, look what we won! We cleaned up! We danced rings around every other couple! Circus rings! Saturn rings!

FRED

Rings of rings! Killer diller!

LEETA

Aren't you proud?

CHRIS

Huh. Unlike some, I've got to earn a living. Now where's my coffee?

FRED

Man, you need to chill with that coffee crap.

(FRED relocates CHRIS to couch. CHRIS cradles briefcase in lap.)

Let me lay some of this on you instead.

(FRED parks glass in CHRIS' hand and pours in wine. LEETA crosses to stand stage left.)

CHRIS (repulsed.)

What is it?

FRED

Relax, man, it's pinot noir.

(CHRIS sniffs wine, swirls, sips then drains glass.)

Far out, man!

CHRIS (to Leeta.)

Why's he talk like that?

FRED

I'm like a baby, baby. Reborn every night. So everything's new, everything's vital, everything's exciting. Dig?

LEETA

I dig!

CHRIS

Hogwa..

FRED (interrupts.)

Everything moves, everything pulsates, everything beckons. Every new night, man.

LEETA

Heavy!

CHRIS

Heavy?

FRED

I'm a sponge, man. Vampires are, you know? We soak stuff up, dig?

(CHRIS peers suspiciously into emptied glass. FRED parks glass.)

Man, don't be a square. Look. I've got some time before that glaring spotlight in the sky's turned on and I've got to say nighty-night. So do me a solid. Let's have a confab.

(FRED sits next to CHRIS.)

CHRIS (to Leeta.)

He wants to talk to me?

FRED

You got it, brother, I want to talk to you. So, close the shades, man, and stop giving me the hairy eyeball. I'm trying to pass the peace. I'm trying to extend some good vibes, do you copy?

LEETA

Groovy! He wants to be nice to you!

CHRIS

Groovy! Brother, ask my wife to make me a cup of coffee?

FRED (to Leeta.)

Best rest your bones, foxy mama. This dude's out to lunch.

(LEETA drops to couch. Shines up trophy with skirt.)

See what she's doing? She's polishing the fruits of her labor. She boogied down with gusto like no one's business. Yours truly boogied down with gusto like no one's business. It was the best night of my life, and I've lived some wild ones, man. In one hundred thousand nights, you do.

CHRIS (sneers.)

Did you say, lived?

FRED

You heard right, youngblood.

CHRIS

You've got a weird idea of living.

FRED

Look whose gums are flapping. I was there last night. You weren't. The night shines, man. The night beckons. The night boogies. Which you would know if you weren't holed up in your pad, sleeping your life away.

CHRIS (huffs.)

Look who's talking.

FRED

You look who's talking, man. You work too hard. Day in and day out, dig?

CHRIS

No, I don't dig.

FRED

I know you don't dig, jive turkey. That's why this casanova's wearing your dance shoes. That's why this casanova's wearing your foxy mama's feather boa.

CHRIS (to Leeta.)

Is that your boa?

LEETA

That's my boa.

CHRIS

You gave Fred your boa?

FRED

Mellow out, man. Like your foxy mama said...

CHRIS

Would you stop calling her foxy mama?

FRED

Stop dipping in my Kool-Aid! Like your foxy mama said, I want to be nice to you, man. I want to share the wisdom of the ages. Go light in the night! That's my motto. Try it, jive-turkey.

CHRIS

I do my job. I'm responsible. No questions asked. Every day, man. Dig?

FRED

You've got some kind of flaw, man.

CHRIS

Look who's talking...

FRED

Some kind of hangup, man. Stop being a putz tied to those square threads and chained to that briefcase. Go light in the night! You might even get to try the boa.

(FRED tickles CHRIS with boa. LEETA giggles.)

CHRIS

What are you, a marriage counselor?

FRED

What do you even carry in that briefcase, man?

CHRIS (sarcastic.)

What do you think?

FRED (reaches for briefcase.)

Let me see, man.

CHRIS (hugs briefcase closer.)

Keep your dirty claws off my briefcase.

FRED

Okay, man. Okay. Copacetic.

LEETA

Geez, Chris. Take a chill pill. Fred's got gorgeous claws.

FRED (stands.)

All I'm saying, man, is life's short, and that's no jive. Life's short. Especially yours. Make it count. Dance a little!

(FRED pulls out pocket watch. Checks time.)

I gotta skitty. Peace out.

(Exit FRED to bedroom, right.)

CHRIS

Am I a putz?

LEETA

If you are, at least you're my putz.

CHRIS

Maybe I should have been there last night?

LEETA

Maybe you should have been there last night.

(LEETA polishes trophy for all she's worth. Enter FRED, right, in pajamas, still with feather boa. FRED moves to stepstool, climbs up to coffin, lies down inside.)

FRED

Catch you on the flip-side.

(FRED pulls coffin lid closed.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 1
Scene 3

Setting: Same apartment. Drawing of a grinning Fred taped over mirror. Three trophies now stand on coffee table. Coffin remains atop counter.

At rise: Leeta busy in kitchen frosting cake. Hums snatches of tunes and boogies.

(Enter, CHRIS, back, with briefcase and shopping bag. LEETA comes out from kitchen. Licks fingers. Wipes hands on apron.)

LEETA

You're home early.

CHRIS

Uh, my last meeting was cancelled. I thought you had your reading club?

LEETA

I skipped it today. We're reading *The Shining*. What a load. It's too trippy!

CHRIS

What an irony. You're bosom buddies with a vampire and you find *The Shining* too trippy.

LEETA

That's what I mean though, right? Since I've got Fred, all that make-believe stuff is just that. Make believe. It's not as cool as the real thing. Anyway, I stayed home today mainly to make a cake. It's Fred's birthday. He's three hundred and fifty years old today.

CHRIS

Vampires don't eat cake.

LEETA

It's the thought that counts, right? We'll need a blowtorch for the candles, though.

CHRIS

What about a stick of dynamite? *Ker-powie!*

LEETA

That's not funny.

CHRIS

It's not supposed to be.

(LEETA spots string of garlic dangling from shopping bag. She removes apron and parks it on counter as CHRIS hastily drops garlic into bag. LEETA moves to snag bag. Upends it.)

LEETA (kneels to sort through stuff.)

Garlic? Holy water? A crucifix? Where's the silver stake to drive through Fred's heart?

CHRIS

I just want to dissuade him.

LEETA

What do you mean dissuade him?

CHRIS

Get him to leave! Move on! Keep on steppin'! All the way back to Transylvania for all I care.

LEETA

Don't talk about Fred like that. You'll hurt his feelings.

CHRIS

He can't hear me. He's dead.

LEETA

He's not dead. He's napping.

(CHRIS drops stuff back into bag. Stands to set bag on counter.)

CHRIS

He's coming between us, Leeta. We used to be so happy before the night of the living dead.

LEETA (stands.)

Maybe you were happy. I was a disco queen stuck in the closet. Then Fred became my disco king.

CHRIS

See, there you go. I used to be the king in your castle. Fred even stole my dance shoes.

LEETA

Fred didn't steal your dance shoes. You didn't want the shoes, remember? You wouldn't set foot in those shoes. You were traumatized by a conga line once, right? That's what you said.

CHRIS

I wasn't traumatized.

LEETA

(Moves to couch. Sits.)

That's what you said. You said you were traumatized. Destroyed. Straitjacket material.

CHRIS

I wasn't straitjacket material. I was a little embarrassed.

LEETA

And your little embarrassment kept you from fulfilling my big dream.

CHRIS (moves to sit beside LEETA.)

My birthday was last week. You didn't bake me a cake. You went out dancing with Fred.

LEETA

I brought you a trophy.

CHRIS

I don't want a damn trophy. I want my wife back.

LEETA

You want your wife back? Prove it. Do The Hustle.

CHRIS

Do what?

LEETA

It's a dance, silly.

CHRIS

I told you. I won't dance. That lady whose ruffles I stepped on? That was my mom. I got a new name after that. It was clod.

LEETA

Come to think of it, you didn't even dance at our wedding. You blamed a stomachache.

CHRIS

I had a stomachache. That's how scared I was to dance.

LEETA

Everyone's scared by their mom. Let Fred tell you about his mom, the Bride of Frankenstein.

CHRIS

Fred again. You're always talking about Fred.

LEETA

I am?

CHRIS (alarmed.)

Has he bitten you?

(CHRIS reaches to look under the boa at LEETA'S neck. LEETA swats his hand away.)

LEETA (disappointed.)

No, I haven't even seen his fangs.

CHRIS

That's a relief.

LEETA

Still, there's something about him, you know?

CHRIS

He eats rats, Leeta.

LEETA

Probably not that. Let me see... Is it his spark? His flair? His widow's peak?

CHRIS

He doesn't have a widow's peak.

LEETA

Not that, then. Is it his charisma? His humor? His warmth?

CHRIS

He's a cadaver, Leeta.

LEETA

Hmmm... I know! He dances!

CHRIS

Very funny.

LEETA (sincere.)

No, I mean it... He dances! So light on his feet! A dream!

CHRIS

You sure he hasn't bitten you?

LEETA

I told you. I haven't seen any fangs.

CHRIS

Maybe Fred doesn't have fangs? Maybe we got a defective model?

LEETA

Fred's not defective.

CHRIS

Maybe we should take him back? Fred came with a moneyback guarantee, right?

LEETA (pointed.)

You'd take Fred back? Then who'd be my dancing king?

CHRIS (tentative.)

I could try.

(LEETA jumps up to turn on boombox. Music plays.)

LEETA (boogies.)

Prove it. Dance with me.

(CHRIS reluctantly rises to deliver some stiff moves.)

Bummer. You're not as good as Fred.

CHRIS

I'm a little rusty.

LEETA

That's the square biz. It's like you're wearing cement shoes!

CHRIS

I'm trying. Give me some credit.

LEETA

Oh, I do. Chris. I do give you credit. Lots of credit. It's just, well, you're not as handsome as Fred, either.

CHRIS

(Stops dancing. Shuts off boombox.)

What?L

LEETA

I don't mean handsome, exactly. I mean...mesmerizing. Fred's mesmerizing! No one can ever

LEETA (Cont.)

take their eyes off Fred. Especially me.

CHRIS (considers.)

Huh. Any way you cut it, seems like I could take some lessons from Fred. Tell you what. Why don't I go out dancing with you tonight?

LEETA

Will you, Christopher? You'll love it! I just know you'll love it! And, you can help celebrate Fred's birthday.

CHRIS (checks watch.)

Fred will be up soon. Why don't you go get ready? Take your time. I know you want to look especially foxy for Fred's birthday.

(LEETA kisses CHRIS' cheek.)

LEETA

Groovy, Chris. You're so understanding!

(LEETA moves upstage toward bedroom. With a glance toward CHRIS, she snags the shopping bag. Exit LEETA, right. Sound of door closing. CHRIS listens then moves stealthily upstage to briefcase, which he quietly opens. Pulls out gun with silencer. Sets it gently on counter. Pulls out silver stake. Creeps toward coffin.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 1
Scene 4

Setting: Same apartment. Lights very low.

At rise: Couple slow-dancing to romantic music emanating from boombox.

LEETA

Show me your fangs?

(FRED hisses. LEETA giggles. Exit both, right. News flash from boombox follows.)

BOOMBOX

A body pulled from the Hudson River has been identified as Christopher King, believed to be Christopher “Killer” King, notorious enforcer for the mob. King has been tied to dozens of deaths across Manhattan Island. A string of garlic knotted around King’s neck, the murder weapon, has sparked rumors of yet another mob war...

CURTAIN.