

CHAPTER V
439-YEAR-OLD ELIZABETH
OUR BIGGEST PUZZLE

In the Spring of 1979, at 11:30 p.m. on May 13, the phone rang at the Center. I was tired, and promised myself that this would be the last call I would take for that night. Sure enough — I was sorry I had picked up the phone. Another prank call. It was a woman who said she was a vampire. She said she had seen me on television and decided to call me; and guess how old she said she was? Over 400! I mentally gave her a rating of 3 on a scale of 10 for a rotten story, and was about to hang up; but as long as I'd gone that far, I figured I might as well ask her the standard questions, just for the record.

In the next five minutes I was suddenly wide awake! And I was sure that whoever was on the phone was worth an interview! We parried questions and answers in a rapid, staccato-like exchange, and her responses came easily, with no hesitation. She was articulate and rational — and dead serious!

She said her name was Elizabeth, that she had been a vampire since she was "about 17 or 18 years old," and had been born in England somewhere around 1540. She said she was currently living in Florida, and had

lived there for 17 years. Before that she had lived in Indiana "for quite awhile."

K: Elizabeth, why did you call me?

E: Well, I haven't talked about myself to anyone for a long, long time, and I've been sort of depressed lately, and then I saw you on that TV show — I have a videotape set-up so I can see the earlier shows when I wake up. And I thought . . . well, there's something about you . . . Anyway, I just thought I might like to talk to you.

K: All right. Tell me about yourself. Where did you go to school?

E: I've never had a formal education. But I do a lot of reading. I'm finally figuring out my physiological make-up.

K: What do you mean?

E: Well, I must have a liquid diet. A special one. Human blood is the only food my system can tolerate.

K: What does your doctor say about this?

E: I don't go to a doctor.

K: How often do you drink human blood?

E: Every day.

K: And how much do you drink each day?

E: I've never measured it, but I guess about eight or nine pints.

K: Where do you do get this blood?

E: I drain a human body.

K: You drain a body? Every day?

E: Yes.

K: How do you extract the blood?

E: I choose one of the six major arteries, and cut

it. Usually with a straight razor.

K: How do you . . . I mean . . . do you tranquilize your victims first, give them something to subdue them?

E: Definitely not! I don't want to pollute the blood with drugs. I'm also very careful to check for needle marks. I don't want to get a drug addict.

K: But, then, how do you subdue your victims?

E: I can't tell you that.

K: All right. You say you drain a body a day. Doesn't that mean you have to dispose of a body every day? Isn't that a bit difficult? How do you manage that?

E: There are several methods.

K: Can you tell me some?

E: I'll tell you of one. There was a man I drained, then I left him in his car, took off the brake, and pushed the car into a body of water. It's been two months now, and the body has not been discovered yet.

K: Will you give me another example?

E: No.

K: Do you choose victims of one particular sex or age?

E: No. It doesn't matter.

K: How do you feel while you are drinking blood?

E: That's hard to describe. Let me see . . . my feet get cold. And I can't hear anything. It's like . . . like a dreamless sleep. Or like . . . I guess yawning might describe it. At one point the feeling gets very intense.

K: How long does this go on?

E: Until there is no more need for blood. It takes

about 25 or 30 minutes.

K: What type of bed do you sleep in?

E: I've had a special sleeper made, with a cover over it.

K: You mean a coffin?

E: No, it's not a coffin. I do need some air, and the sleeper is designed to let some air get in when it's closed. I have corduroy pillows in it. It's very comfortable.

K: When do you sleep?

E: During the daylight hours. And this is upsetting sometimes. I hardly have time to take a shower and get to the stores before they close.

K: What do you buy in the stores, Elizabeth?

E: I've answered a lot of your questions up to now. But I'd like to ask you some things.

K: Go right ahead.

E: Did you ever meet a male vampire who said he had impregnated a human female.

K: Let's say I've met some who claim they are vampires, and also claim to be fathers.

E: Well, here's some information for your files: nine out of ten male vampires are impotent. It's a matter of hormones, plus their body temperature is too cool to support healthy sperm cells. Another thing I'd like to ask you now . . . can you give me the names of any other vampires?

K: (I gave a name I made up off the top of my head.)

E: I've never heard of that one. Name some more.

K: They really don't want me to give out their names. Do you know any other vampires yourself?

E: Yes, but they're all neurotic. I guess I am, too, but I don't like to be with them.

K: Do you like to be with, uh, normal men? Have you ever been married?

E: No, I've never been married. I have no interest in men, except for intellectual company.

K: But don't you have any—forgive me, but this is for research purposes — what about your sex life?

E: (sharply) I am not all interested in sex. And I will not discuss that subject with you!

K: Excuse me — I wasn't trying to be rude. Can you tell me how you look? Do you look your age?

E: I'm five feet, two inches tall, and I have a very nice shape. I've been told that I look anywhere from 19 to 26 years old.

Later on, Elizabeth furnished a much more detailed description of herself, which I will repeat at this point:

K: Do you look like a normal person?

E: (laughing) I don't know how to answer that!

K: Well, do you look like something out of a Martian comic strip, or Vampirella? Is there anything unusual about your appearance?

E: Under some conditions I can get away with just a few stares. But my skin, my movements, my hair are different.

K: What color is your skin?

E: I tell people I'm an albino. And my eyes, if you look at them long enough, would be curious. They resemble glass; lead crystal. The texture is different.

K: Could you describe them a little more for me?

E: How to phrase this . . . imagine if you will a piece of cloth and a piece of metal. When you shine a light on the cloth and it goes through it's dull and diffused. But when you shine it on the metal it bounces back. Well, it's the same basic idea with eyes.

K: I don't quite know what you mean.

E: The iris of human eyes is tissue, but from studying my own, I suspect my own eyes are crystalline. I would look in the mirror and study them. This would account for the sharpness of vision that I have, even of objects at great distances. I can define even the smallest line on a dollar bill at 50 yards.

K: What do you do for income, Elizabeth?

E: I own a lot of real estate, and have a substantial income from that.

Our conversation went on for another half hour. She told me she liked art, music, dancing, painting, reading, and sewing. She made all her own clothes, "mostly black things," and used mirrors to fit the clothes to her body. She "rather liked the smell of garlic" although she could not eat it. I was about to ask another question, when . . .

E: (worriedly) I have to hang up now.

K: Yes, I guess we have been talking for quite some time. But you are a very fascinating person, Elizabeth. Will you call me again?

E: No. I'll probably hate myself for three weeks for making this call. You'll never hear from me again. But I needed to talk, and you have cheered me up considerably. Thank you, Dr. Kaplan.

After she hung up, Roxanne and I talked over what we had just heard. We were inclined to believe that Elizabeth was a hoax; her story was simply incredible. And yet, her vivid account of how it feels when she drinks blood lent a feeling of truth to her words. Her answers were so smooth and nonchalant, no matter what I had asked her. But to kill a person a day for so long, and get away with it? It was an intriguing call, but it had to be a hoax.

We began to think back. We had received several reports of vampire activity in Florida, but this was the first time a person claiming to be a vampire had contacted us from that area; and she had mentioned that there were other vampires there, too. Based on reports we've had, there were strong indications that this woman might not be joking. Either she was a vampire, or truly believed she was one, which was just as dangerous for the victims. On the other hand, one of the things that made us doubt Elizabeth's story was that she would not tell how she subdued her victims. If she were as petite as she described herself, it would be pretty difficult to handle even an average-sized man. But, if she did tell us her method (s), as Roxanne pointed out to me, Elizabeth could betray herself.

We were very interested in her reference to the reproductive ability of male vampires, as it was something we had not thought of before. Hopefully, some day we'll be able to convince a male vampire to undergo laboratory tests. The problem here is that none of them so far has consented to even talk to anyone other than myself and one or two researchers.

They insist on anonymity and will not risk the exposure.

Elizabeth's allusion to a "human" female was intriguing. Did she mean that vampires are not human? Why hadn't I asked her that! I had been so amazed with what she had been saying that I didn't pick it up at the time.

Overall, Roxanne and I agreed that Elizabeth sounded like an old-fashioned type of woman. She sewed, painted, read, cleaned house, kept herself well groomed, and had a rather Victorian attitude towards sex — no interest. Might we say she'd fit comfortably into the English society of the 1500's?

Summing Elizabeth's call up, we were left with several possibilities. Was this woman — who called long distance from Florida to New York (she said) and spoke for over an hour to me — simply a very bright practical joker with a good imagination, who didn't care how she spent her money? Was she a person looking for some kind of notoriety by contacting me? Was she mentally disturbed, truly believing she was a vampire? Or could she possibly have been telling the truth?

We closed the office for the night after making a detailed report of the conversation. It had been an interesting call.

Six weeks later Elizabeth called again. This time it was 3:15 a.m., July 8. Half asleep, I groped for a pencil and scribbled some notes as we talked. Unfortunately I didn't tape that conversation, but I can tell you the gist of it.

She said she had enjoyed talking to me very much, and wanted to call me just once more. Although she was worried about her security, the mental lift she'd gotten from our last conversation was so great that it was worth the risk to her. I assured her that she had nothing to fear from the Vampire Research Center — that we have always respected the confidence of our clients; and I told her I was really glad to hear from her. This seemed to make her feel good.

I asked her if she was still drinking blood, and she said, "Of course. That's all I can eat. I told you that."

I asked her again how much blood she drank each 24 hours and she again said she never measured it. We talked a bit more, and then she said she had to hang up, as she was on her way "out to dinner."

After that call, I decided to keep a tape recorder next to all my telephones, as I believed Elizabeth would call again. It's much easier to analyse a voice, a conversation, and reactions when you can replay the whole thing and listen objectively; and I wanted several consultants to hear her, too, so they could offer their comments about the case.

My hunch was right. We had received only the first two of a long series of telephone calls from Elizabeth, a series which continued for six months. It was fascinating . . . incredible . . . even awesome to speak to this woman; but going through the conversations became tedious sometimes. Elizabeth loved to talk! I mean for three hours at a time! She always called near midnight, which meant that my staff and I had to work into the wee hours of the morning. But tedium aside,

what emerged from these talks was a story so puzzling, so mysterious, and so chillingly possible, that it had our staff in an uproar for months.

We checked history, hematology, criminology, and physiology sources. We called in expert consultants in the fields of acting, voice analysis, psychology. We even had several psychics give us their impressions of Elizabeth.

Following each phone conversation, our entire staff would listen to the tapes, make analyses, and draw up a list of questions for me to ask her the next time she called. We purposely repeated questions, asked things out of context, and tried to trap Elizabeth in a lie. We devised a way to get her to mail us some material, in an effort to trace her. We notified the police in Florida that there was a possible mass murderer on the loose somewhere in their state — of course knowing they couldn't do much with so little information, but we felt we should tell them anyway.

I joked with Elizabeth and cajoled and humored her, and actually grew to like her quite a bit over those months. And fear her, as well; for I never could be sure just what I was dealing with.

What follows is taken from the hours and hours of actual taped conversations I had with Elizabeth. Much of it is condensed, and some of it is out of context in order to keep the same subject matter together. All of it is fascinating . . . JULY 19, 1979: Elizabeth began by telling me she had taken a trip to Bermuda, then returned to a new residence in Florida. She said that her van had been stolen during that time; and she was

particularly upset because she had lost a custom-made "sleeper" she had put in the van about a year earlier.

"It was solid oak with mahogany inlays, and the inside was lined with cedar, and around the top, to conceal the fact that there was a lid, was a brass band about two inches wide, with hieroglyphics from the Book of the Dead, the Papyrus of Ani."

I asked her if she had reported her stolen van to the police and she said she had not, as it was not registered in her own name. She had paid someone to get her a false registration and driver's license, as a personal security measure.

A little further into the conversation, Elizabeth told a chilling story . . .

E: Oh, I had something very interesting happen. I was stopped at a light and I didn't have my car doors locked, and this guy runs up to the car and jumps in. He takes out a knife and says, "Drive!" I was in a hurry to get someplace and I really didn't have time to deal with this man. "Get out of my car!" I told him. He didn't seem to be amused by that, and he said, "Drive, lady, or else!" (laughing) I said, "Okay, if you say so." So I drove. That's never happened to me before.

K: So what happened at the end?

E: Well, I drove.

K: And you left him somewhere?

E: I did what I had to do.

K: Might we say he's no longer going to be a threat to the world?

E: You could put it that way.

This really upset me. If there were even a bit of truth

to Elizabeth's claims, I felt she had to be stopped. I had already inquired about putting a tracing device on my phone, but was told that since I never knew when she would be calling, it wouldn't be feasible. I had the feeling that tracing alleged vampires was not top priority with the phone company. So I decided to try to get Elizabeth to mail me something — anything — and perhaps we could trace her that way.

K: So how much blood are you drinking these days? I know you told me you don't measure it, but I just thought I'd ask again.

E: That's right. I don't measure it — but since we last talked, I looked it up and it was something like 12 or 10 litres. I have a book here — anatomy and physiology.

K: (intentionally giving her wrong information) No, they're wrong. You're wrong. I've done quite a bit of research on that. You don't have 6 quarts in you. No way.

E: Well, good grief, this is a text book that people are studying in college to become doctors and nurses!

K: It can't say 6 quarts in the human body.

E: Oh, yes it does. I'll Xerox it and send it to you.

K: Can you do that? (Success!)

E: Yes, I'll definitely send it to you.

During this long conversation, Elizabeth gave us much information about herself:

- Her sleep is more a form of hibernation than "human" sleep.
- She cannot turn into a bat; thinks that's utter

nonsense.

- Her teeth look normal, except for two that are a little longer than the rest, which you “could call fangs, I suppose, but I don’t like the word.”
- She had recently met a male vampire in Florida whom she had known and last seen in 1863 or thereabouts. “I looked and he looked at me at the same time, like a dual double-take, and I thought, ‘You!’ and he was aghast. We didn’t say a word to each other that time; just kept going. Right now he stays in his half of the state and I stay in mine and we just leave each other alone.”
- She gave us some of her past history. She was born in either Folkstone or Canterbury, England, and was in the Tower of London in approximately 1556 or 1557, awaiting beheading for having become a Protestant. She had been carrying incriminating letters for her boyfriend of the time, Thomas Willfield, and had been caught . . .

E: I had a choice when the priest came to take my confession. I was raised a Catholic, so if you don’t confess you go to hell and all, and I had the choice of either confessing that I had become Protestant and had been attending Mass in falseness, and risking being burned at the stake, or keeping my mouth shut. As it was, I was going to lose my head. I didn’t confess.

K: What happened?

E: (a bit tongue-in-cheek) Well, in through the window, like Peter Pan, comes this person. I was not asked do you want to do this, or what do you think of this. I was told, “Here, put these on.” He cut my hair;

he took me out of there. That’s when I went through the vicissitudes.

I then asked her some more about her blood-drinking . . .

K: Do you drink the same amount of blood every night?

E: No.

K: How much variation is there?

E: Well, I haven’t paid that much attention to it. Let’s see. Oh, one night I might mark, say, one. The next night I mark two, the next night mark one.

K: What’s “mark” mean?

K: Mark. A mark.

K: You mean a victim?

E: Yes.

K: How do you avoid coagulation of blood in the body. It does tend to gel, doesn’t it?

E: Not the way I do it.

K: What specific techniques do you use to avoid that?

E: Go for one of the six main arteries.

K: And how do you open it?

E: The usual way.

K: Which is?

E: Oh, I use a knife.

K: Last night, did you use a knife?

E: No, last night I was traditional about it.

K: Which means?

E: I used my teeth.

K: How many bodies would you say you’ve consumed over the years?

E: Oh, gosh — figure it out. I don't have a calculator with me.

K: Would you say roughly, ten per week?

E: Roughly. It varies with my cycle.

K: Elizabeth, is it all right if one of my researchers asks you a question?

E: It depends on the question.

Carole: Elizabeth. why exactly are you calling?

E: Because there's something about Stephen that interests me.

K: Anything specific?

E: Well, you seem to be very intelligent. You seem to have your head on straight. And there must be some psychology to it, inasmuch as *to be recognized as a person — for that is what I am before I am anything else, means a lot. And to be recognized as a person by someone who knows what I have done and am doing is somehow good, although I may be risking my security.*

K: Another question from Carole, Elizabeth. Were your parents vampires?

E: (laughing) I don't think so. No.

K: So when did you first start drinking human blood?

E: 1558 or 1559, around then. I was chronologically around 18.

K: Elizabeth, this may sound a little pushy, but

is it possible to get a sample of blood? Could you mail it to us? Just put a drop on a glass slide, place another slide on top of it, wrap it and mail it to us. Can you do that?

E: This sounds kind of peculiar. I'll think about it.

K: Good. Then we can have it professionally analysed for you. We might come up with something that could help humankind as well as yourself. You know, if we can find what makes you live longer, we might be able to apply this to everyone, and help save a lot of people, and live longer lives.

E: Well, one thing that occurs to me is this — to have been exposed to all the viruses, bacteria, diseases, everything from typhoid to polio, I must have very powerful antibodies in my blood.

K: Well, I would certainly suspect that to be the case, and that certainly would be a help to other people. Do you mind being a vampire, Elizabeth?

E: As that is academic — it's difficult to say.

K: Vampires are usually seen as evil. Wouldn't you like to change that image?

E: I really don't know what it would be changed to. I hate to think this could develop into a three-ring circus.

K: I don't mean putting you on exhibit. I mean, if what you have could help people — instead of taking their lives, you could serve people—wouldn't that be a great gift to mankind?

E: People in general are stupid. What's the point of saving them?

From this point, we went on to discussing a few of Elizabeth's hobbies, one of which was painting and sketching. She also liked to watch sports, gymnastics, figure skating, ballet, and sketch scenes from them.

K: Is it possible to draw me something? I'd like to see your own art style. All you'll have to do is sign it "Elizabeth." We'll know who you are.

E: Okay — I'll sign my name as I used to. My handwriting has changed quite a bit over the years. It's still unreadable. It was easier to read when I printed. There was no such thing back in those days as so — called cursive writing. Pens have certainly improved. I like the fine point ones.

Roxanne asked Elizabeth if she remembered the Civil War. Elizabeth said yes, she had been "in the middle of Sherman's march." She had been trying to stay out of the direct line of battle but was going in the wrong direction, "headed for the sea." She was between Atlanta and Charleston.

Then Roxanne asked her when she first came to this country. She answered "Just before the Revolutionary War" about 1775, on a boat whose name she thought was Farragut. It was very crowded. "Those things! I don't know where in the world people got the idea they were seaworthy!"

Eventually I got Elizabeth talking about her "hunting" and blood-drinking habits again. I asked her what she usually does to find a victim.

K: I mean, you're going to leave there tonight, then what?

E: Well, after I get off the phone with you I'll put

on my "out" clothes.

K: What's "out" clothes? It's not a cape and hat, is it?

E: No. (laughs) . . . Pair of pants, my \$21.00 tennis shoes, a pair of socks, brassiere, that sort of thing. Right now I'm wearing a satin robe-type housecoat. It's what I slept in.

K: Now, when you go out tonight, where will you go then?

E: Uh . . . I'll probably go south this time, because I went north last night.

K: You do the opposite of what you did the day before?

E: No — just different. I'll drive for a ways, and walk for a ways. How long I travel depends. I just go until my sixth sense or whatever tells me, okay, stop here. Then I walk and go in this direction, then I go in that direction, whatever my mind directs me.

K: Where do you find people at that hour?

E: You'd be surprised. People walk around the streets at all hours. There's no problem about it.

K: How do you select your victims?

E: I prefer tourists. (condescendingly) For one thing, most people are not very bright. Half of them don't bother with traveler's checks, the other half never informs anybody where they're going or how long they're going to be gone. They wouldn't be missed for a month, most of them.

K: And what do you do with the body?

E: It depends on the situation. I usually try to dispose of the remains as close as possible to the

situation. Quickly, if possible. You know, when people die it's rather messy.

K: How do you feel after you finish drinking your meal?

E: Strong.

K: And how do you clean up? Blood stains must be really rough to get out of clothing.

E: I'm very careful about that. I've gotten to be very good at it over the years.

K: What about finding a willing victim? Why don't you buy blood from somebody who's willing to sell their blood?

E: Oh, for God's sake! That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard of, really!

K: All right. Now, let me ask you a kind of strange question. I've been approached by about 400 people. There are a lot of radio and TV people who want to interview you. Now, I know you don't like "public relations". . .

E: That's for sure.

K: But is it possible, for instance, to do a radio hook-up? In other words, you would call my number, and we would do a radio show from here?

E: That's something I would have to think on for a long time.

K: Not longer than my lifetime, please. It runs out a lot faster than yours — unless I find the "elixir" too.

E: You're too old.

K: I'm not too old! I just look old.

E: You're over 30, aren't you?

K: Over 30? All right, I'm over 30, but that isn't over the hill. I've got another 4 years, at least.

E: Usually, by age 24 the body is dying at such a fast rate that you would never survive.

K: My associate is going to kill herself. She's over 24. In fact, even Carole is over 24. She admits to 26.

E: I have never turned someone through the vicissitudes. I would not, if I were going to do it, do it with anyone over the age of 25.

K: Don't you want to have a couple of more people "in the field" — or do you feel it's like competition?

E: Well, the word that comes to mind is responsibility. I don't want the responsibility of another vampire. I have a responsibility to maintain myself, not to make a public spectacle of myself. I just don't want to have anybody with me that closely.

K: Elizabeth, what happens if you don't drink blood? What happens to you?

E: Well, I'll tell you — I'm beginning to feel the effects right now. Certain agitation. My heart beat in the advanced stage of it will start to fluctuate. And I become very security-conscious.

K: In what way?

E: I start to pay strict attention to sounds. I seem to hear more, see more. The slightest little thing attracts my attention. And I will be getting off the phone with you soon . . . I have to.

K: Okay. But before we hang up, remember, we

want a slide of your blood, a sample of your writing, and maybe a picture that you draw for us.

E: Well, I'll think about it. It might compromise my security, and I need time to see if I want to do this.

K: All right, Elizabeth. You think it over. I hope to hear from you again. Thank you very much for calling.

JULY 31, 1979: Elizabeth called at 11:45 p.m. My first question was, had she mailed anything to me yet. She said she had some things ready, but had not yet decided to mail them.

The next half hour or so concerned Elizabeth's business dealings and how she coped with daytime activities when she could only function at night. And as we talked, some supremely interesting things came out. She told us:

- She has a phone answering machine.

- She has a secretary who runs daytime errands for her, and who is aware that Elizabeth is a vampire. "Otherwise she would be a threat." Her secretary is the "intended" of the other vampire in the state of Florida.

K: Is she one of his girlfriends, or a victim, or what?

E: What is known as an "Intended." When her training is over, when she's old enough . . .

K: How old is she now?

E: About 20. I'm not really sure.

K: Does she help you secure victims?

E: Of course not! You ask some of the stupidest questions!

K: Well, you caught me half asleep. I have to warm up. So anyway, what have you been doing lately? Anything new?

E: Well, for the past week, every night when I get up I write down what my state is and have been keeping a little note for you.

K: And what is your state now?

E: Medium. I was taught the finger method. What you do is hold your hands up, fingers and thumb outstretched. The tallest finger of the left hand is zero and the tallest finger of the right hand is one hundred, and then — I don't know — I do it by feeling now. But what you do is, if it's been say, 16 hours, you count back, 2-4-6-8-10-12-14-16 and then you know if you need blood or not. It was part of my training.

K: Where did you get your training from?

E: Well—from my teacher, of course. My lord.

K: So what happened to him? To your lord?

E: I don't know. I haven't seen or heard anything from him in, let's see — I didn't see him in the 1970's, the 60's . . . or the 50's . . . It might have been, uh, 1927 or so.

K: And who is your lord?

E: I forget what I called him then. He's Michael to me now. He was Michael after about 1860 or so.

K: What position did he hold, to train you for this?

E: I guess a way of putting it would be to say he was my parent. (very British accent beginning to come out)

K: If I wanted to become a vampire, could I?

E: You're too old. Way too old.

K: What do you mean, too old! I'm 38. I can still sing and dance, you know.

E: That's much too old. It could be done, but you probably wouldn't live more than about five years, then you'd die.

K: That doesn't sound like a fair trade-off to me. I mean, I wouldn't mind living two or three hundred years, but to die so quickly — in five years — I'd rather die the old way.

E: I seriously doubt if any vampire would do it with you.

K: And why not? I take a shower!

E: (laughing) Well, I fell into that one, didn't I?

K: But say I was young enough — say 24 or so years old — what kind of ceremony would I have to go through to become a vampire?

E: No particular ceremony. Although it was done with ceremony with me.

K: What actually happened?

E: It was practically a cult back then. I had to wear a white gown. I was locked in a room for three days, and then the door was unlocked and I was told to find Michael and Dino. It took me three hours. It never occurred to me that they were sitting around waiting for me. They lit seventeen candles. I think it was because I was seventeen years old — but no, maybe I was eighteen or sixteen. It was in the Fall. My birthday is in January. Well, anyway, Michael just looked into my eyes, held up my wrist, and said I should just sit down and calm down. Dino thought that was amusing. He

was just sitting in the background, pretending. He wasn't really doing anything. Apparently I had sufficiently calmed down after a little while and the process was done.

K: What process was done? Did they give you chemicals?

E: No. It's a transfusion process of blood. Michael cut his arm. My blood was transferred to him.

K: How?

E: The usual way. He bit me on the neck, and went on from there.

K: Which side did he bite you on, right or left?

E: I'm not sure. I think it was the right side. It hurt! I froze with pain. He drank the blood; it was flowing pretty freely.

K: And how did he give you blood?

E: I don't know. I was not conscious then. I don't want to think about that.

K: So what actually made you become a vampire?

E: I think I have it figured out — it's a theory, mind you. But I think there is something in the blood of the vampire, or maybe transmitted by the bite, that is capable of making another vampire under the right conditions. Just as the sexual act is capable of producing a baby, so the vampire bite may be capable of producing another vampire because of whatever is released into the blood.

K: Elizabeth, that vampire you know in Florida — does he look like you?

E: He's the same basic race. There are different

racess, but the race that I belong to is the only one having any great intelligence.

K: What race is that?

E: There's no specific name for it. We're simply The People. He's from the same group as I. In fact, I think he's distantly related.

K: But you're not the human race?

E: We started out as human, but after the vicissitudes, no. Definitely not.

K: I could use your opinion, Elizabeth. I'm writing a book on vampires that exist today. How many vampires do you estimate there are in the United States?

E: That's a very difficult question. It could be 10, it could be 50.

K: How many to your knowledge?

E: Well, let's see. If they're all still living today . . . four, five, six, seven . . . I know of ten that are probably still living including myself.

E: Where are they located? Do you know that?

E: Well, there are three that I know of in Louisiana. One in Indiana. Myself and Joachim here (Florida). I have no idea where Michael is. He may not even be in the country. Dino is a relative of his, and I don't know where he is. Nobody has seen or heard anything from him in a long time . . . since around 1950 I suppose.

K: Are there any vampires up in Canada?

E: I really don't know.

K: What about in Wisconsin?

E: There might be one in Wyoming, but I don't

know of any in Wisconsin.

K: I've got a lot of vampire reports from up that way, that's why I asked you.

E: Well, somebody could be running across borders there, too.

K: What about Canada, again? Nova Scotia? Toronto?

E: Really, I don't know. But I was up in Nova Scotia once on a vacation.

K: What year?

E: Let's see, when was that? It wasn't this last winter; it wasn't the one before that. So it must have been the winter before that. I went up there for a couple of weeks.

(This really amazed me! We had received vampire reports from Nova Scotia during the winter of 1977!)

K: Are you the oldest living vampire?

E: Not so long as Michael is around. He would be approximately 100 years older than I am. And Dino's older than he is, if he's still around. Then I'd be the oldest one after them. Everybody else I know is younger, by a good margin.

K: What do you think of the chance that you and I may meet, Elizabeth?

E: I can't get away right now.

K: But I have a chance to get down to Florida in the next few weeks. I have a choice of either Miami Beach or northern Florida. Speaking engagements. Do you think we'll have a chance to meet in Florida?

E: I don't know, really.

K: What area are you from?

Heaven -

Monday

Anything marked as yr initials is
yours to keep.

If you are indeed coming to Fla - give me
advanced notice if you want to meet w me.

I never do anything in the spur of the moment -
I have not lived this long by being careless or
impulsive. I will take a few notes for you to
arrange such a meeting. I must feel sure
I will not meet w anyone other than
you people at a time.

Just - I give you my word that
so long as I do not believe you to have
sacrificed my own security in any way, I
will never so much as raise my voice
against you.

This promise I make the if may be
w comfortable w possible.

Take me seriously, then, as I have
told to tell in my life who is of true value
to me... My integrity is one of my
valuable things.

Hoping this note finds you in good health.

I have the honor to remain,

Your most humble servant,

Elizabeth

E: No particular area. I don't frequent the south.

K: So you're in the north area?

E: More often than not. I have three places - I'm at one, then I'm at the other, then the other. It's a triangle which enables me to cover a large area.

K: Elizabeth, remember the last time, I asked you to get a sample of your blood to be mailed to us? Are you doing that for us?

E: No. God knows what you'd do with it. It's beneath my dignity and I won't be subjected to it! I have to hang up now.

K: Okay, Elizabeth. But don't forget to mail me at least that information you promised.

E: I shall mail it. Good night.

A week later - August 8 - I received a package from Elizabeth! The return address on the package was "Barbara Fields" in Seattle, Washington and so was the postmark. Inside were several photographs of people she had known over the "past 100 years or so"; samples of her handwriting, both cursive and calligraphy; a poem she had written; a photocopy of a page from a medical journal detailing facts about blood; some samples of textiles she claimed were from clothing she had sewn for herself; a few items she considered humorous; and three even more interesting things. The first was a blueprint and specifications she claimed had been given to a carpenter to construct her "sleeper"; the second was notes detailing how much blood she'd needed during the past week; and the third was a letter, written in calligraphy, addressed to me personally. She agreed to meet with me in Florida upon "three nights' notice" but, to protect herself she

would meet with no more than two people. Part of this letter follows:

"I never do anything on the spur of the moment. I have not lived this long by being careless or impulsive.

I must feel secure . . . And — I give you my word that so long as I do not believe you to have sacrificed my own security in any way, I will never so much as raise my voice to you. This promise I make that you may be as comfortable as possible."

Two nights after the package arrived, Elizabeth telephoned. It was then August 10, 1979.

K: Who's this "Barbara Fields" in Seattle, Washington — the one you have in your return address?

E: That's just an alias. An identity I use occasionally.

K: In Washington?

E: No. In business.

K: But the address is in Washington.

E: Yes. From there it goes someplace else, and from there it goes to my secretary, and from her it gets to me finally.

K: Who's the pretty blonde in the picture?

E: Charlotte? That is a business secretary. She's not my secretary anymore.

K: Okay, Elizabeth. Now, I have some questions that Carole wants to ask you. She wrote them down for me. How did you meet Michael?

E: I was in the Tower of London awaiting execution and he came through the window.

K: Next question: Did you ever go back to your

family after your "initiation"?

E: Of course not.

K: Did your family ever know?

E: No. I was miles and miles away from them. They thought I was dead, I suppose.

K: Did you eat food any more?

E: No.

K: I'm trying to read Carole's handwriting. It's terrible! Your handwriting, by the way, is intriguing. Where'd you learn to write that way?

E: It's just the way I learned.

K: Have you taken any courses in calligraphy?

E: No.

K: Next question: Were you human before your initiation? I didn't write these questions, so I'm not going to apologize. I feel like Mike Wallace.

E: (laughing) Yes, I was human.

K: Question 4½: Why are you so willing to tell us about yourself if you don't want to be found?

E: My own curiosity. More to learn. I need new ideas. You get stagnant after awhile. Can you imagine how isolated I am?

K: I can see that. Let me get another question for you. Can you tell us something about your childhood?

E: Well, when I was five years old I was sent off to avoid the Reformation, and I was raised in a convent where, more often than not I was beaten and starved for the good of my soul. I went to live with my aunt about a year later, and she was called to court when Mary came to power, and I went with her. (accent

becoming very British) They hoped that because we had been staunch Catholics and had stayed Catholic all through the Reformation period there, even though they took away property and really gave us a hard time, it was hoped that I would be able to find a husband.

K: Elizabeth, let's get back to the present time. You and I are supposed to meet each other in the near future. How long can we talk when we meet you?

E: (accent fading, resumes her usual mid-western-slightly-southern sound)

E: Let's see — umm — 10:00 — 2 hours. I have this penchant for safety. I would want a good safety factor and plenty of time to do what I have to do.

K: And that is?

E: (hesitates) Hunt.

K: When you say hunt — I must ask — isn't there a tremendous risk of getting of caught?

E: There is quite a bit of risk of being seen or having a pattern noted.

K: Now, let me ask you this — you say there are about ten vampires you've met or heard about in the United States alone. Have you heard of or from any in the last couple of weeks or so?

E: I've heard from Joachim, but he's included in that number.

K: Do you have any friends, Elizabeth?

E: I have Charlotte. She's the closest thing to a friend that I have.

K: I've mentioned to you before, I'm writing a book and one of the chapters might be about you — about your life, your thoughts. What philosophy would

you like to be remembered for, as a vampire?

E: My philosophy of life? Well, be the best of what you are.

K: Are you the best of vampires?

E: I hope so.

K: What makes you so good?

E: Well, I'm careful — damn careful.

K: Wasn't your teacher 100 years older than you, and doing a lot better? And wasn't he wiser?

E: At that time, yes. I believe I have now surpassed him.

K: Elizabeth, we have an associate who is a radio commentator. Would it be possible for us to do a radio show, with three phones — yours, mine and his?

E: I have thought about it, but I've decided against it. Some of my business people who think I'm dead could recognize my voice.

K: By the way, do you ever come into New York City? Is there a chance you can visit me here?

E: It would take some doing. I'd have to case the place for at least a month.

K: A month? Come on, why a month?

E: I would want to know everything I could about the comings and goings, personal habits, the works.

K: I don't smoke, I don't drink, and I don't run around. What else is there to know? But all fooling aside, I really can see why — your safety. Now, I see here you've sent us a chart of your state, or condition when you wake up, and how you feel right before you drink your — what do you call it? Your lunch? Dinner?

E: Mark.

K: Your mark. So, right before you eat your mark . . .

E: (English accent suddenly very pronounced) I don't say "eat" either. I just say I'm going to mark. But marking is something which is very, very seldom discussed among The People.

K: By the way, one of my associates is asking why your English accent has suddenly become much more prominent. Is there any particular reason?

E: Must be because I'm in a good mood. When I'm by myself it's very thick. When I'm speaking to someone it depends on who they are what my accent will be. By the way, Stephen, I have a question for you. I would like to know some of the details of your first meeting with a real, live vampire. What was your reaction, and what were the emotional consequences?

K: I would rather talk about you, Elizabeth. Do you feel you are killing when you are taking food, or do you feel it's not killing, but just finding food?

E: It certainly is damaging to the physical body of that person; however, that person's spirit, I do not believe it dies. I am no more drastic than an automobile accident to that person. I treat people in general well enough. I think of them as little children in a way; or to use my secretary's favorite description, uneducated bumblng nitwits.

K: Have you changed physically or mentally over the years?

E: For one thing, the older you get, the faster you get, the better you get, the stronger, the more secure. Either that, or the weaker, and you die.

K: Carole has another question, Elizabeth. How many teeth do you have?

E: (sounds almost shy) I'd have to count. (pause) Ten on the top . . . and twelve on the bottom.

K: Do you have molars, incisors? How many of each?

E: Oh, for God's sake! I'm not sure which really is a molar.

K: Did you ever have a cavity? And what color are your teeth?

E: No, I never had a cavity. My teeth are perfectly white.

K: Another question from Carole — If you are asexual, as you claim to be, then why are there male and female vampires?

E: Because they were male and female humans. So the outside structural appearance remains basically the same.

K: Another one from Carole. Do you have mental telepathy abilities?

E: Yes, as a matter of fact, I do.

K: Elizabeth, as you know, Carole is listening on the other phone. She wants to know why you are talking so freely to us, especially when you know we are writing a book and want to use what you are telling us. What are we doing for you?

E: For one thing, you are providing me with entertainment. And you are giving me ideas about how humans think and react. I like to learn. And now I must hang up. I am going to Georgia for a few days, and will

call you when I get back.

K: What part of Georgia?

E: You aren't very subtle.

K: That's me. Always trying.

E: Good night.

K: Good night.

AUGUST 14, 1979: This last conversation brought up many questions. Max had noticed a slightly nasal quality to Elizabeth's voice, and thought he noted some kind of breathing disorder, too. He suggested that she may have broken her nose sometime in the past. Carole found Elizabeth's teeth interesting. Roxanne wanted to know more about when Elizabeth first became a vampire . . .

K: Well, Elizabeth, we have a few more questions for you, if it's okay.

E: I hope they're more intelligent than the last ones.

K: I'll let you decide on that. First question . . . it seems we have a hundred. Where had you met Joachim before you met him on the street in Florida?

E: You mean originally? That was in 1861 or 1862, in France.

K: I thought you were in the United States since 1775.

E: Michael and I had traveled all over the world for quite some time.

K: Next question: If you have no real need to drink blood, would you go after an easy victim anyway?

E: No. I would get uncomfortably full. If I get to

a point where I cannot consume any more I will feel, umm, a sort of aching feeling on my right side. That will hold me for eighteen hours, when I get that high a load.

K: All right. Next question. Have any of your victims ever escaped?

E: In my early years they did, and then there have been occasions where I have goofed. But that is a very rare occasion. When I go after somebody I don't let them go on.

K: We have had many vampire attack reports. Why do you think other vampires lose their victims? This question is from our physiologist.

E: The only thing I can guess, really, would be lack of education, perhaps.

K: Okay. Question 7½: When was the last time you had medical treatment?

E: Never.

K: Are you immune to human diseases? Or do you ever get any illnesses that we don't?

E: I don't know, really. I do have certain problems with aerosol sprays. They cause me to sneeze violently.

K: Do you have any other problems?

E: Well, my nose was broken. Michael did it with the back of his hand when I was living with him during the training, for about a year. It swelled up terribly, and a piece of cartilage came out when I blew my nose. There is a slightly indentation on the left side of the bridge of my nose.

K: Okay, how did you treat it?

E: Left it alone.

K: Have you ever studied acting? Ever a professional or an amateur performer?

E: No.

K: Do you have a passport, Elizabeth?

E: I have quite a few passports. (laughing) I can't use a lot of them anymore because the people that they were supposed to be died.

K: Which countries do you have passports for?

E: Next question, please.

K: All right. Your teeth. Carole finds them very fascinating.

E: What about "my" teeth?

K: What happened to your original human teeth?

E: Nothing special.

K: Well, the average human has around 32 teeth, and you have far less than that. Don't you find that unusual?

E: Really? I didn't know that. My goodness.

K: What do your teeth look like now? Are they flat? Blunt? Sharp?

E: They're very white, solid. That's about it, really. They're teeth. There are two that could be described as fangs, but I just call them teeth.

K: Do you use those teeth on your mark?

E: Of course.

K: When Michael drained your blood and you were becoming a vampire, how did he get the blood back into your body?

E: It was through the wrist. Through the radial

artery. He used a knife.

K: So what part of his body did the blood drain from?

E: (annoyed) You don't know what the radial artery is?

K: You mean it came from his wrist to your wrist?

E: No. I drank it.

K: What happened to him when he gave all that blood from his body to yours?

E: I wasn't paying much attention.

K: How long did it take for your teeth to change to "fangs"?

E: More than a fortnight, less than a month.

K: You mean between 2 and 4 weeks?

E: You knew! Good for you!

We went on to discuss her blood-drinking again. She said she does not drink from a dead human, that when her victim dies, that's enough. She does not drink animal blood, although for the first two weeks of her "training" she began with animal blood, going from smaller to larger animals as she progressed.

She said she can run at least 30 miles per hour, keeping up with a car going that fast, and can maintain that pace depending on why she is running.

She mentioned that she had practiced Witchcraft in the middle 1500's; but after careful questioning it was apparent to me that she did not know what she was talking about. I have studied the subject extensively and lecture on it, and she was really ignorant about some of the simplest details. When I confronted her with this, she said . . .

E: I only know what I experienced about four hundred years ago, and you're asking me things now that make no sense to me because they don't apply to me.

K: Elizabeth, if you were in my place, talking to someone as I am talking to you, there are several categories we could put you into. One, a real vampire; two, a vampire-like person; three, a hoax; four, unknown. Which one, based on the information you have given us, and based on the rather sketchy evidence you've mailed us, would you put yourself into?

E: To be honest, I would say "unknown."

K: A good way for us to get you from "unknown" to "real vampire" would be to have a blood sample. It doesn't have to be beneath your dignity to do this. We have a hematologist who will analyze it for us. Is it possible?

E: I'm not sure I want to do that. Because this way, I've always got an "out" . . .

K: But it's important that we prove your credibility, and we need your help, don't you agree?

E: It's important to you, yes. But why should that be important to me?

K: For the same reason that you are talking to us. Obviously, in some way you are trying to help us, am I correct?

E: Yes, but it's for my own benefit. For instance, tonight you've irritated me. Now I am speaking to you, I am interacting with you in a way that I have not done with any other human being since I was a human. I'm not speaking to you as I would to a vampire, because

you don't know certain things, and you wouldn't know what I was talking about. So I am experiencing something which I have not experienced before. And, well, it is enjoyable. You are providing me with information on humans and an insight that is invaluable to me.

And there is no one with whom I can get this raw, at times even callous and very candid approach. You don't quite know — I'm still the unknown, so you're going to push it, you're going to really put me on the spot, and this is very energizing.

K: How long did you stay with Michael, Elizabeth?

E: From 1557 until 1862, or about those dates.

K: Did you each have your own territory? Why did you split up?

E: We shared wherever we were, and we split up because we were tired of each other, I suppose. It was mutual consent.

K: Elizabeth, a lot of people I've mentioned you to are skeptical of your existence. How could I prove it to them?

E: If I wanted to prove to you beyond a shadow of a doubt that I am what I am, I might have to break my promise not to raise my voice against you.

K: You mean that's the only way? By knocking me off? Can't we use one of my associates? Wait a minute, hold on — I think Carole just quit!

E: I could scare the living daylights out of you. Don't you realize what I could do to you? If I were to just strike you with the back of my hand, it would

probably break your neck right where you stood and kill you instantly.

K: Thank God I'm covered with Blue Cross and Blue Shield. I wouldn't worry. Besides, if you're dead, you're dead.

E: That's what they say. Your attitude is refreshing.

K: If I were afraid of you I wouldn't be talking to you. Besides, one of my associates has volunteered to be your victim. (laughs) Really, Elizabeth, don't worry. We're only joking. Now, how else could we prove you are what you say you are?

E: Well, you are going to meet me.

K: Yes. Now, we will coming down with four people. Two of us will meet you, but we would like to have three. Actually, all four of us would like to interview you.

E: You've got to understand something. Living as long as I have, I haven't gotten away by not allowing myself huge margins. I have a certain amount of caution where you're concerned. I've never done anything like this before. I've come to believe that the best way to stay alive is to always assume that the other person knows your every thought and can outdo you in everything, and that way you will never run the risk of underestimating them, fatally perhaps. I don't know you well enough to really trust you.

K: Elizabeth, you're either a hoax, an unknown, a real vampire, or a great actress. You've done a lot of research, a lot of hard work. You're very clever, and you've got a good command of the English language.

You're pretty hip on the subject.

And whether I want to believe you or not — one of the problems with researchers is, when they find something they feel fits in with the subject, they want to believe it. I always tell myself never be too "hungry" to want to believe something simply because I'm pursuing it. You understand what I'm saying?

E: I believe so.

K: In other words, I don't find a ghost unless there's a ghost there, no matter how badly I want to find it. And when I finally reach a conclusion, I still realize that something else might come along tomorrow to change the whole picture again.

E: I would have to talk to you more before I would really feel comfortable.

K: Well, we've run out of questions for you for tonight. We've certainly asked you a lot. And we will meet soon. I'm looking forward to seeing you. And next time we talk, I'll have some new questions for you.

E: I don't know what you are going to do with this. I'd hate to think . . . (pause) . . . I am worried about the emotional reaction you may have when you meet me. I don't know that you've ever seen a real one before, and knowing in advance what I am, but not really what to expect . . .

K: Well, don't worry. I've met some of the most unusual people on earth. I work with unusual people all the time. So, we'll speak again in a few days. Thank you for calling.

AUGUST 15, 1979: This night, the NBC-TV show "Real People" on which I appeared was repeated.

Since I expected the usual flurry of crank calls after my appearance, I had the phone at the Center connected to my answering machine. In this way I could hear who was calling and avoid the unimportant ones. The phone rang constantly, and I hardly paid any attention to it until I heard one particular message coming through. It was Elizabeth, and she was talking rather sadly. It sounded like she was reading rather than simply speaking.

E: Stephen, this is Elizabeth. I'm calling tonight

I saw your show and saw, not just heard, your sincerity, and know you to be an intellectual, honorable person, and good in your way. I am sorry and dishonored. I am a fraud. I deceived you, Steve. I thank you for your honor, and wish you godspeed and safety in your work. You've done me a great deal of good.

I quickly picked up the phone, not wanting to lose contact. Elizabeth had deceived me!? I had to hear the whole story . . .

K: This is Stephen Kaplan, Elizabeth. How have you deceived me?

E: Well, I've been using you rather selfishly.

K: In what way?

E: I've wanted to know certain things — things that were necessary to me, and I've used you to find them out.

K: And what have you found out, Elizabeth? And in what way did you deceive me?

E: (long pause) Umm — I told you . . . umm . . . I can't tell somebody a lie right to them. I just can't do it.

K: Well, then, can you tell me the truth, please?
E: I was going to tell you that I was not a vampire.
K: Really? And what are you?
E: Well . . . I am.
K: You are what?
E: A vampire.
K: Can you remember if you're a vampire or not? Elizabeth, come on, will you tell me the truth please?
E: I have. (flat, unemotional voice unlike previous times)
K: You have what?
E: Told you the truth.
K: And which truth is that? Are you an actress, or someone who believes you are a vampire?
E: Whatever suits you is fine with me. (annoyed)
K: No, no, no! That's not what I want you to say. I want you to tell me the truth, please.
E: I know what I am. That is enough for me.
K: Yes, but you see, you've told me a lot of things after all these hours, and I'm waiting for the true true story. Do you think you might tell me?
E: Why is it necessary?
K: Why? Because you've taken a lot of my time, and I feel that somehow you owe me.
E: I think I have given as much as I have gotten.
K: No, it doesn't work that way. Can you tell me the truth, please?
E: What specifically do you want to know?
K: In what area have you not been telling the

truth?

E: I haven't lied to you at any time until tonight.
K: And how did you lie to me this evening?
E: When I got your recording, I assumed you had probably gone to bed.
K: I was going to retire, but when I heard you saying you were going to tell the truth, it perked up my curiosity. And I want to know that truth. If it's an elaborate hoax then it's very sad, because we've worked a tremendous amount of hours, and you've wasted a lot of our time and effort. But I'd rather be embarrassed now than later.
E: (long pause) It's not a hoax. But you would be more comfortable with it if it were a hoax.
K: All right. Could you then do me one favor? Could you send me a photograph, not of your face, but of your teeth?
E: I will not do that.
K: Why not? That would be some proof. I don't want to look at your eyes, I don't want to look at your body, I don't want to look at your skin, I just want to look at your teeth.
E: (long pause) No matter what you believe, I have gotten what I needed. So it is not to my benefit to send you this, and I won't. You asked how to classify me. Call me a hoax.
K: All right. I'm not satisfied with the information that I've gotten so far. You do not know much about witchcraft. I feel you were making that up.
E: That's fine. Why should I be an expert?
K: If you were a practicing witch you should

have known some basic facts.

E: Well, evidently I was wrong. I thought that that was what I had been doing. I was told I was a practicing witch.

K: So why don't you send me a photograph of your teeth?

E: Because I want an "out." I still have it.

K: How do you mean, an "out"? I don't understand. In what way?

E: I want to be able to bow out as a hoax, which is what I was going to do tonight.

K: Yes, I know that. Well, that's all right. We're going to let you bow out anyway. Were you auditioning for a part before you called us?

E: You really do think I'm a hoax? Well, good. Goodnight. (hung up)

She was gone. And she never called us again. We were left with her fascinating story and a mysterious puzzle to piece together. Was she a hoax? Was she . . . an unknown?

I'm going to end this chapter here and let you decide for yourself what Elizabeth was. Obviously, a lot of her story was questionable — but a lot more, if you keep an open mind, was at least possible. Our staff wrestled with this case for weeks after her final call, and we still don't have a satisfactory answer.

There's just one more bit of information I will give you:

On October 27, 1981, the Boston Globe quoted 24-year-old James P. Riva II, on trial for murder, as saying, "I've been a vampire for four years."

Later in the article, his mother is quoted: "He told me he had met vampires in Florida, and that he knew some were 200 years old."

What do you think of that!?