AUDITION From “No Signs of Intelligent Life”

(The following is Scene 7, “They Do What on Halloween?” It has been altered slightly for just two actors, 1 male and 1 female, although others are presumed to be listening to the presentation as well. This excerpt may be used royalty free for auditions or classroom work.)

(AT RISE: A small arts and crafts presentation has been set up in a craft store. A PRESENTER (female) is discussing possibilities for making your house festive for Halloween. Several chairs are angled towards his craft table where he has a variety of decorations and pumpkins. If you produce this play out of season, Styrofoam pumpkins will work fine. The chair furthest away is empty but will soon be occupied by ALIEN (male). Alien is caught in a SPOTLIGHT DS while the presenter is preparing for the demonstration.)

ALIEN: American traditions are one field we aliens are particularly interested in. Christmas confuses me…I mean you cut down a tree and bring it inside your house and then you take all your lights and put them outside of your house. During the 4th of July the goal appears to be to blow up everything in sight. And I am convinced that Valentine’s Day was created to stress out male humans while giving their female counterparts an opportunity to yell at them. Today I am at Bonnie’s Craft Shack for a presentation on (Reading a pamphlet.) “Festive ideas for decorating your home and costuming your children in celebration of Halloween.” (Back to audience.) Halloween is most fascinating to me because of this: (Holds up a pumpkin.) We actually have these on my home planet! You call it a “pumpkin;” I call it “friend.” (Looks lovingly at the pumpkin.) My best friend back home, Craig, is a “pumpkin.” He is the wittiest guy I know, and we communicate telepathically.
ALIEN: (Cont'd.) (Inspecting the pumpkin.) It appears this one is dead since it is no longer attached to its root system. I can’t wait to see what humans do to honor the dead pumpkins, as they are so close to my heart. I’m sure that I will not be disappointed and that their bodies will be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve!

(LIGHTS come up on the set and ALIEN takes a seat.)

PRESENTER: Good morning, folks, and thanks for coming out to Bonnie’s Craft Shack for this very special presentation on celebrating Halloween. Now all of the materials needed to create what I’ll be showing you today are available right here in the store. But I’d like to start this presentation by setting the mood with...a scary story. Lights please!

(Some unseen force DIMS the LIGHTS a bit as PRESENTER pulls out a flashlight.)

ALIEN: (To audience.) Excellent! I have heard that Americans love telling scary stories.

PRESENTER: (Placing the flashlight under her face to light it up.) This story takes place on a dark and stormy Halloween night. Little Ghouls and Goblins crowd the streets and slowly, ever so slowly, one of them edges towards your door...

ALIEN: (Getting into it.) This IS scary!

PRESENTER: The Goblin’s little hand reaches up and suddenly... (PRESENTER knocks hard on the table three times. The ALIEN jumps.) You open the door...

ALIEN: (Wrapped up in the story.) No! Don’t open the door!

PRESENTER: And there you find yourself, face-to-face with... (Dramatic pause.) ...a trick-or-treater!

ALIEN: (Covering his eyes.) GASP!

PRESENTER: But here’s the really scary part...you don’t have any candy!
PRESENTER: (Cont’d.) They yell out, “Trick or Treat,” and believe me, you definitely don’t want a “trick” from this little goblin.

ALIEN: No! No, you do NOT!

PRESENTER: So what do you do? Go to the fridge and—

ALIEN: (Way into this imaginary scenario.) You must protect your home at all costs! You grab a sharp object, like a broadsword, and if that goblin attacks, you stab, but aim for the heart! Always aim for the heart!

(LIGHTS quickly come up. PRESENTER is staring at ALIEN who is crouched up in his chair by this point.)

PRESENTER: What!?!?

ALIEN: I’m sorry; you got me so worked up about the goblin.

PRESENTER: (Trying to maintain control.) It was just a fun little story to get your creative minds working.

ALIEN: (Lowering himself.) Oh...oh, of course. (Trying to laugh it off.) Go on, please.

PRESENTER: Well, would you go to the fridge and try to find the trick-or-treater a healthy snack, like an apple or an orange? An excellent idea! But some parents are wary of unwrapped treats, even if they are fresh fruit. Does anybody have another idea?

ALIEN: Cough drops? (Looking around.) Those are usually individually wrapped, correct?

PRESENTER: (Ignoring ALIEN.) Anyone else? (Beat.) I remember one time as a kid I received a toothbrush when I was trick-or-treating. (Glowing smile. Holding up a toothbrush.) If you find yourself short on candy, or if you just want to encourage a healthy holiday, it’s a great idea to pick up some extra toothbrushes so that after those little goblins finish eating all that candy, they can brush their teeth and save their parents some money on visits to the dentist.

ALIEN: (Coming to a sudden realization.) Ohhhhh! Those are for brushing your teeth! Of course! It’s right there in the name. TOOTHbrush. (Smacking himself on the forehead.)
ALIEN: (Cont’d.) How could I have been so dense
(Chuckling to himself.) I’ve been using mine to brush
my--

(Suddenly realizes EVERYONE is staring at HIM; he
has revealed too much.)

PRESENTER: To brush your what? You’ve been acting
weird ever since this presentation started. Are you from
around here?
ALIEN: Sort of…
PRESENTER: So what have you been using your
toothbrush for?
ALIEN: Let’s just say I won’t be putting it in my mouth.

(PRESENTER visibly shudders.)

PRESENTER: (Trying to get things back on track.) Now,
we don’t sell toothbrushes here at Bonnie’s Craft Shack,
you’ll have to pick those up on your own at your local
drugstore, but we do have a wide variety of beautiful
pumpkins and gourds stacked out front. Did you all see the
wide selection when you came in?
ALIEN: (Shaking his head.) Those piles and piles of
corpses. (Wiping his eyes.) I just hope they lived a good
life.

PRESENTER: (Looks at HIM, again a bit unnerved.) As
I was saying, we have a wide variety of pumpkins and
gourds for you to display on your porch as a sort of sign to
trick-or-treaters, letting them know that you are “open for
business.” And, if you make sure that the base remains
dry, I’ve had gourds last well into early spring. And then
when they do start to get soft and moldy, just throw them
in your compost pile and oftentimes you’ll find a new little
crop of gourds growing right in your own back yard!
ALIEN: (His hands pressed together in a prayer
position.) Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.
PRESENTER: But I know that most of you aren’t here just to buy a pumpkin and let it sit out on your porch. (SHE starts to spread out some newspaper on her table.) I’m sure you all want to know the basics, and some of the more advanced techniques, of carving.

ALIEN: (Quietly, to himself.) Carving?!

PRESENTER: (Picks up a plump pumpkin and places it on the table.) First, you want to find a big, sharp knife! (PRESENTER brandishes a nasty looking chef’s knife. Use a stage knife and have the top of the pumpkin precut.)

ALIEN: I do not like where this is going!

PRESENTER: Now where do we want to start?

PRESENTER: That’s right, at the stem! We want to make a big old opening right at the top. So just jab your knife in… (SHE does.)

ALIEN: (Hands up to face.) Argh!

PRESENTER: (Sawing away.) And simply saw around the top in a circle. Then, pop the top right off!

(SHE pulls the top off with panache. If pumpkins are in season, you should have a nice bunch of stringy seeds and “brains” dangling from the top. ALIEN has turned green…well…more green than usual.)

ALIEN: (Raising his hand.) I’m sorry! (Pointing at the table.) Are you going to use those small paper bags?

PRESENTER: (Puts a paper bag on her hand and holds it up, making it talk.) Don’t get ahead of yourself, but yes, soon I’m going to show you how to turn a regular paper lunch bag into a fun and festive puppet!

(ALIEN stands, walks over to PRESENTER, rips the paper bag off her hand, and exits the stage holding his stomach. PRESENTER looks after him in shock.)
PRESENTER: (Again trying to regain control.) Any who.
Pull out your trusty ice cream scoop, or any large spoon,
and dig out all the innards.

(SFX: ALIEN can be heard vomiting into a bag offstage.)

PRESENTER: (Trying to ignore him.) Place the innards to
one side and let your children sort through the stringy
goop to pick out the seeds.

(SFX: More heaving from offstage.)

PRESENTER: (Cont’d.) I like to make a little game of it.
Whichever one of my sons finds the most seeds the
fastest gets to choose our pumpkin’s design. And we have
many pre-printed designs to choose from here at Bonnie’s
including a bat, a cat, and even a spooky ghost. Now I bet
you’re wondering how long do you have to let the seeds
dry before you can bake them and eat them?

(ALIEN has heard enough. He reenters.)

ALIEN: Whoa, whoa, whoa! You eat Craig’s brains!?!?
PRESENTER: Um…who is Craig?
ALIEN: (Covering.) I mean…You eat the pumpkin’s
brains!?!?
PRESENTER: (Cheery as ever.) Just the seeds. (Holds
up a bowl of prepared pumpkin seeds.)
ALIEN: (Looking into the bowl.) His precious children.
What have they done to you?
PRESENTER: (Not stopping.) I rinse them, lay them out to
dry for at least six hours, bake them in an oven on low until
they turn just slightly brown, and then add a dash of salt.
(ALIEN is looking around, appalled.) Go on. (Motion-
ing with the bowl.) Try one.
ALIEN: (Offended.) How dare you!
PRESENTER: Really. They’re quite tasty!
ALIEN: (To audience.) I promised my supreme leader that I would respect the humans' traditions so I guess…that I must. (Looking to the sky.) Forgive me, Craig. (ALIEN gingerly reaches in and plucks out a single seed. He very slowly puts it in his mouth and begins to chew.)

PRESENTER: (Sets bowl down.) Now today I want to show you one of our more advanced carving patterns: A witch. First you take the template...

ALIEN: (A smile spreads across his face.) This seed tastes amazing!

PRESENTER: I'm glad you like them. (Back to demonstration.) First take the template--

ALIEN: May I have some more?

PRESENTER: Um…sure…go right ahead.

(ALIEN takes the bowl and walks DS with it as PRESENTER tries to continue behind him.)

PRESENTER: I like to secure the template with a little scotch tape or some push pins and then...

(ALIEN pops a huge handful of seeds into his mouth, to the point where they are falling out of his mouth as he is speaking.)

ALIEN: What an excellent source of protein and what flavor! I could survive on these for an entire Earth month!

PRESENTER: Please try to leave some for the rest of the group.

ALIEN: (Ignoring PRESENTER, continues to gorge himself.) And what is the flavoring you said you put on these?

PRESENTER: Um…salt.

ALIEN: Salt. Yes. (Chewing.) Salt! (Turning on PRESENTER.) In what aisle will I find this "salt"?

PRESENTER: Well, we don't sell salt here at Bonnie Craft Shack but…
ALIEN: You said at the beginning of the presentation we could buy all the supplies we needed right here in this store.

PRESENTER: *(A bit scared of HIM.)* Well, I figured you had salt at home.

ALIEN: Does it come with the home?

PRESENTER: No…it comes from the grocery store.

ALIEN: Affirmative. *(Turns to the other HUMANS.)* A good day to you all! I am off to the grocery store.

*(ALIEN sets down the bowl, still chewing, starts to exit, turns back and picks up the bowl, tilting it so that the rest of the seeds fill his mouth, then he exits.)*

ALIEN: *(Cont’d. Seeds falling from his mouth.)* As you were!

*(HUMANS watch in bewilderment as HE exits. LIGHTS fade to black.)*

From: “No Signs of Intelligent Life”
By Bryan Starchman
Published by: Eldridge Publishing Co.
http://www.histage.com/playdetails.asp?PID=2521