

ELLE



OUR
WOMEN
IN
HOLLYWOOD

ISSUE
STARRING...

JENNIFER ANISTON

BARBRA STREISAND

MICHELLE PFEIFFER

VIOLA DAVIS

NAOMI WATTS

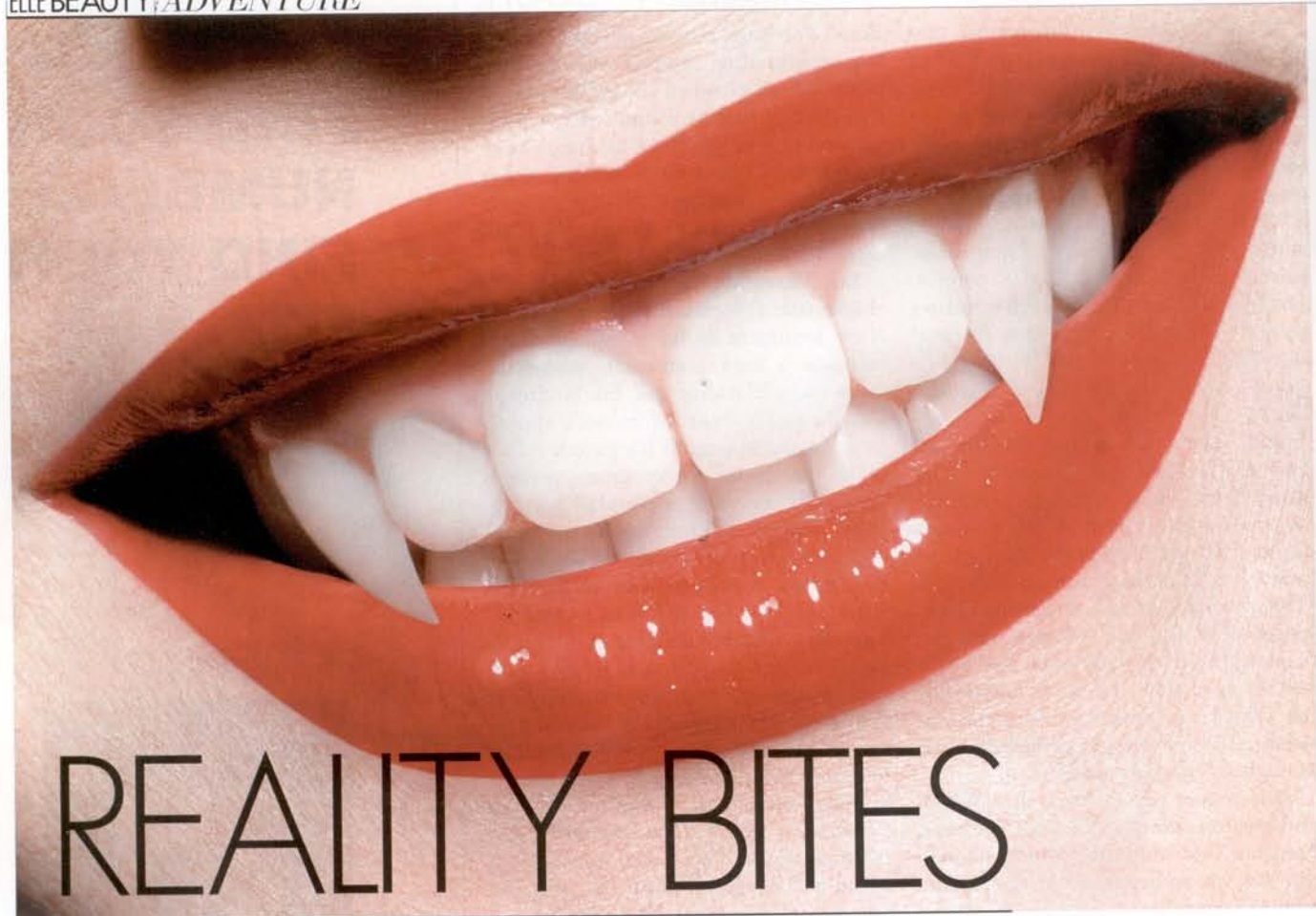
EVAN RACHEL WOOD

ELIZABETH OLSEN

FREIDA PINTO

AND MORE...

NOVEMBER 2011 ELLE.COM



REALITY BITES

In a *Twilight* world where blood sucking is de rigueur, even doctors have sunk their teeth into the trend: drawing on patients' own blood as the latest killer filler. Is it science? Supernatural? In pursuit of the truth, beauty adventuress **Holly Millea** opens a vein for the team

Bellying up to the bar in McSorley's Old Ale House, established in 1854, I found myself next to the loveliest creature I'd ever encountered. He was golden-eyed and crimson-lipped, with skin the pale blue hue of skim milk. I was meeting my editor, Liesl, but she was late as usual, so he and I struck up a conversation. Did he come here often? "Since opening night."

His chin-length, pitch-black hair smelled of fresh pine, and when he raked it back, his pierced ear held a dangling Victorian heart twined with thorns, a dark ruby in its center. "A memento mori from a lost love," he said, pupils dilating. "My first." He took a long draw from his Bloody Mary. I told him time heals all wounds and that I was a Beauty Adventuress and—no offense—his eyeliner was a little thick and he looked anemic. "What you need," I said, "is a great big steak." He flinched at the word. Clearly, he was a vegetarian. He worked at a blood bank, and when I asked his type, he smiled and replied, "Type A." Posi-

tive? Negative? "Type A, as in Anything." I laughed and he recoiled at my garlic breath, proffering an Altoid between two long, oval-shaped fingernails, buffed and beautiful. I said my type was not the type to donate, because I hate needles, and he said he drew blood using a needleless technique, and I told him he should file a patent on that, pronto.

We small-talked. His favorite book? *Blood Meridian*. Film? *There Will Be Blood*. Play? *Sweeney Todd*. Fruit? Blood oranges. Song? "You're So Vein." They were all dead giveaways, as I look back now. But I was drawn to him like a fat kid to a Happy Meal. And when he opened his floor-length cape and purred, "Step into my office," I told the barkeep, "Hold all calls," and entered the velvet-cloaked darkness, surrendering to his eternal kiss...until Liesl peeked under the hem: "Holly, you shouldn't leave your bag unattended."

Before I could bat her away, I was standing exposed, alone, as if it were all a dream. Where did he go?

"Who?" Liesl asked, perplexed. The bartender shot me a look—*Drop it*—pouring two cabernets on the house. Liesl presented options for this month's Beauty Adventure, All Hallow's Eve-inspired: Werewolf Hair Removal? No. Frankenstein Head Transplant? Tempting. Mummy Tummy Wrap? Humph. Vampire Face-Lift? Bingo!

The next morning, I walked up Park Avenue to the office of Alan Matarasso, MD—considered one of Manhattan's top plastic surgeons—for my appointment, replaying the evening's events. My neck showed no sign of our necking, but I had a small scratch on my lower lip. Had I been bitten or just smitten? My senses were heightened—the oversaturated sky, trees, taxis; the burst of typewriter keys firing through an open window; the thunderous flapping of birds' wings; and up there, nestled in an aspen's decaying leaves, a bat hanging upside down, staring at me with golden eyes, secreting Calvin Klein's Eternity.

I rang the bell. A teensy Sarah Jessica



Parker *Sex and the City* type opened the door wearing a short shift and castle-high Louboutins. Her long arms and legs were bare; her long curls highlighted; her long neck exposed, the carotid artery pulsing fortissimo to the beat of her heart. "Lauren Zeifman," she said, perkily, pumping my hand. "I'm the founder of Park Avenue Skin Solutions," the nonsurgical division of Matarasso's office. "I do all the cosmetic dermatology. We have fun here!" I could swear I heard *his* voice whispering in my ear: "Let the games begin." But I'd be exaggerating.

I sat in a patient chair as Zeifman darted around the room, pulling out numbing cream, gauze, needles, empty vials, and a centrifuge machine in preparation for the Selphyl procedure, the latest in facial rejuvenation. Like Juvéderm, Radiesse, and Restylane, Selphyl restores volume to the face by filling in lines and plumping up areas deflated with aging. But unlike those synthetic fillers, Selphyl uses your own plasma to get the job done. The technician harvests your platelets—those cell fragments that contain growth hormones and that are responsible for clotting—and

tell you that much. Then your body reabsorbs that fluid and you're going to be like, 'It didn't do anything!' But over a four-to-seven-week period, you'll start to see changes—the area fills in. It causes new cell growth and tissue regeneration over time." It's a slow, subtle, improvement: "This is not a 'Wow!' factor like other fillers, okay?" she continued. "It's not to replace them. It's really 'in conjunction with,' to be quite honest. But for patients who want a natural alternative, it's a really good option."

The cost is comparable to other fillers: \$1,500 to \$2,500, depending on the areas treated. Included is a follow-up visit for a laser treatment: "The heat stimulates increased cell growth and tissue regeneration."

Putting a hand on one hip, Zeifman cocked her head and smiled. "Do you sleep on the left side of your face?" In fact, I do. "I can tell, because you have more volume loss there. The face has atrophied more on the left. I can look at someone and know what side they sleep on. People are like, 'Ohmigod! Are you psychic?!' And I'm like, 'No! I'm not a psychic!'" She's actually a physician assistant! "I love what I

you're turning into a vampire today," she said. "Are you really injecting blood into your face? Holly, that's too weird."

I put Virginia on speaker as Zeifman, draining a vein, narrated. "I'm drawing two vials of blood," she said, handing me one. So dark, so warm! "You're alive, baby!" she exclaimed, dropping the vials into the centrifuge. "Now I'm going to spin the blood down, harvest the platelets and fibrin, a watery, uriney-type product. Then inject it back into the areas of concern."

"Lauren," Virginia asked, "what's the average age of your victims?" "Thirty to 55," she replied. "I've done at least one a day since it was FDA approved two years ago." (Later, in an e-mail, Zeifman clarified: "Selphyl is approved for tissue regeneration, not facial rejuvenation. It is currently 'off-label' use for facial rejuvenation.")

Off-label means that medical professionals are allowed the flexibility of using a product or procedure that's Food and Drug Administration approved for one purpose to serve another. While the FDA signed off on platelet-rich-plasma (PRP) therapy for orthopedic injuries, it has yet to give PRP the thumbs-up for cosmetic use.

My cell phone rang; it was my friend Virginia, the original gossip girl. "I heard you're turning into a vampire today," she said. "Are you really injecting blood into your face? Holly, that's too weird."

injects them back into your face. "There are doctors that have marketed it as the Vampire Face-Lift—and I don't appreciate it," Zeifman said. "Because this is *real science*."

Which has incited a real science debate. While one doctor on *The Doctors* promoted the procedure, even offering up one of his patients on-air, others won't go near it because of the lack of clinical trials. "It's not a lift—it has no proven benefit," said a dermatologist who refused to be interviewed because "I don't want to be associated with the procedure." The fact that he was interviewed by *New York Magazine* Matarasso.

do," she says. "I tell patients, 'Anyone can inject, but not everyone can inject *good*.' It's an art, and I really love it, because I'm definitely more of a creative, artsy person. I love looking at someone and really creating. I look at someone's face and I say, 'You need this, you need that.'" What I need, she says, is my left cheek built up so I'm "more symmetrical, because a beautiful face is a symmetrical face. My goal is to get *this* cheek to look like *that* cheek."

My goal was to sink my teeth into her neck, suck the life out of her, and steal her shoes. Zeifman pulled out a loaded syringe. "I'd rather use Radiesse in your cheek so you get instant gratification," she says. "It's going to give you the instant 'Wow!' factor of a thick filler."

Calcium-based Radiesse is the only filler that triggers neocollagenesis (collagen production). "I mix it with lidocaine; you feel the initial pinch and then that's it. You do your cheek while your blood is spinning down for the Selphyl treatment. It only takes two minutes." She turned my arm over. "Do you have good veins for me?" I was about to ask her the same question. My cell phone rang; it was my friend Virginia, the original gossip girl. "I heard

Zeifman retrieved my vials of PRP and pointed to the wheat-colored liquid platelets that had spun to the top, separated from the middle layer of white blood cells and bottom layer of red blood cells: "I'm going to extract this yummy stuff and mix it with calcium chloride, which causes the platelets to burst open with all the growth factors. Once I mix it, I have 10 minutes to inject before it coagulates and I can't push it through the needle."

"I've got to go throw up," Virginia said, signing off. Before Selphyl-ing me, Zeifman raised my left cheek with Radiesse. "See the difference?" she asked, holding up a mirror. "Beautiful," I said, heart pounding, not at my own reflection, but at that of him, my McSorley's immortal. He gave me a wink.

"Okay, here we go." Zeifman set off the growth factors in eight platelet-filled syringes. "Any questions? Because once I start, I really just focus on the injections." Does it hurt? "I wouldn't consider it *pain*. You'll feel the little pinch of the needle going in, and it does burn a bit." (That's the calcium chloride.) But after eight shots under each eye, and five per nasal-labial fold, my face was on fire. Even my nose!

DISCOVER

M LINE NEW YORK

"talking to over
7,000 manicurists
made my expertise

**grow
faster."**

Essie

I worked with salon professionals to create the ultimate growth treatment. My salon-tested "grow faster" base coat makes nails 27% longer in just 5 days. It goes to great lengths, so you look good.



grow faster

just one of my care products.
look for many more.

essie

America's nail salon expert.
Since 1981. essie.com

"That's because [the liquid] diffuses into the tissue of the surrounding area," she explained. "But the sensation goes away within a few minutes." It did. "Are you ready for your unveiling?" Zeifman asked, opening the door to a large wall mirror. Fluid-filled sacks indeed—my eyes were nearly swollen shut; my face was blown up out of proportion. "It's going to all settle and be beautiful," she assured me. Post-care instructions? "Sunglasses. And sleep on your back if you can."

I walked into my apartment, where Truman, my Chihuahua puppy, who, come to think of it, looks like a vampire bat, spied me and crawled under the couch with a whimper. It took all 72 hours for the swelling to subside, revealing a younger me, and it kept subsiding, as Zeifman forewarned, until I looked like the old me. Beneath my eyes, a web of spidery veins that had never been there before appeared, and a strange

blast induced a flinch and a poof of smoke. I looked in the mirror. What a difference 60 seconds made: The fine reddish filigree beneath my eyes and across my cheekbones had vanished, replaced by bumps. My face was covered in what I can only describe as flesh Bubble Wrap. "Those little hives will come down by the end of the day," Dennis assured me.

I asked him if he plans to add Selphyl to his list of fillers. "The more radical the procedure, the slower I am to jump on any bandwagon," he said. "I see lots of side effects of new procedures that people come to me to fix. I want thousands of people to have tried it successfully before my patients so I know it's safe and effective."

Back at Park Avenue Skin Solutions, Zeifman had a solution to my undereye darkness. She had an explanation, too. "It wasn't the iron in your blood—we injected platelets, which are iron-free," she

Slowly, surely, over the next seven weeks, the folds in my cheeks unfolded to a more youthful me. But the undereyes are still a mixed bag, with one slightly improved and the other never reinflating.

brownish cast set into the skin, deepening every day. A Selphyl side effect...or the dark shadowings of vampirism?

There was only one person I could trust: the hippest of Hippocratic Oath-keepers, my dermatologist, Dennis Gross. I filled him in on my Vampire Face-Lift and pointed out the discoloration. "Blood breaks down and it has iron in the hemoglobin," he said. "The question is, Could some of the iron in your own blood, which turns a rust color, be causing it? Before we try to fix that, go back and ask her. If there's an issue, we've got to sort that out first." I confessed to another possibility. Dennis listened intently to the tale of my chance encounter with a tall, dark, caped stranger. And then he burst out laughing. "You've read too many *Twilight* books!"

As for the broken capillaries, he said, "Any swelling that leads to pressure below the skin causes blood vessels to break, and filler can make those already there more obvious." I flashed my bulging, fluid-filled sacks. "They have vessels that aren't circulating blood. They're just little twigs in the skin that we can laser and they disintegrate."

He armed himself with a Vbeam laser: "It seeks out [the broken capillaries] and annihilates them." Fire away! Each bitty

said. "You had sun damage. The pigment was always there and became apparent when the Selphyl added volume, lifting the skin." She pulled out an Aurora skin-lightening laser and zapped the brown tinge. (The dark spots were gone in two days.) Then she did the Selphyl follow-up treatment, eMax-lasering me to stimulate collagen growth, which she said also "tightens the skin."

Slowly, surely, over the next seven weeks, the fluid did reabsorb, and then incrementally my "areas of concern" filled in. The folds in my cheeks unfolded to a more youthful me. But the undereyes are a mixed bag, with one slightly improved and the other never reinflating. I have to say, it was a lot to go through to "naturally" achieve the aesthetics of synthetic filler. But it does give purists an interesting alternative.

These days, I find myself haunted not by vampires or goblins or ghosts, but by a phone call from Dennis. "I thought you should know I've had a patient come to see me who did not fare well with the same procedure—it's been a month and the edema under her eyes has yet to subside," he said, adding, "As a doctor, I have to say, when it comes to looking good, sometimes 'no' is the best treatment." ❌