

Valentine's Day In The Crypt

By J.B. Thomas

Photo - Crypt

Honorable Mention - Short Story

Her eyes fluttered open as the sun went down. Time for another night at the office. Preventing boredom was always challenging for immortals, but having to spend each worknight at an accounting firm pretty much defined "cruel and unusual." Her assignment, though, stealing files, had recently been upgraded when her Lord, Louis Gabriel, revised it to include, "Seduce and kill Matthew, your boss." Eternal life was about to become a lot more interesting.

The February cold didn't bother her, but she turned on the butane stove out of habit and began heating a blood packet. She liked her home, but it was unfortunate they weren't installing electricity when it was built in the nineteenth century. Or was it the eighteenth? Those M's, C's, X's and V's engraved outside were all Greek to her (for some reason, Matthew had laughed when she told him that). But if she was going to nightdream, add running water to the list. PBS should do a spinoff "This Old Crypt."

But February meant tax season and every species in the city had tax work done by her employer, Gray Associates, CPAs. Whether the businesses were Angelic, Demonic, Light, Dark, Black, White, Yin, Yang or any of the other antonyms used to describe Good and Evil, they needed their taxes prepared. No matter how "gray" the business, the IRS got paid. That's how it got its name.

As she picked through the clothes racks along the back wall, her eyes skimmed over her wedding dress. A brief image of her in the black lace gown with Matthew by her side flashed through her consciousness. Right. As if she would marry the dorkiest Mixed Angel in existence. Today being Valentine's Day, she took the red blazer off its hanger. It was also "Ramp up the Seduction of Matthew Day," so her shortest matching skirt and sheerest pink blouse joined it atop the sarcophagus. Stilettos would make her taller than him, a reminder of who was really in charge. She had been enticing him for months and despite his attempts at hiding it, he was obviously infatuated. He wouldn't stand a chance.

She turned off the stove and brought the packet to her lips. Normals had hot coffee when they rose in the morning, Vampires had hot blood when they rose in the evening. Same thing, wasn't it? As her fangs punctured the plastic, she was reminded of Findolin Fairelven, the office Day Manager, who complained that tea from a Styrofoam cup couldn't compare to tea from a proper china teacup. Blood from a baggie instead of blood from a pulsing jugular, now there was hardship. Stupid Elf.

As she dressed, she reviewed again the pros and cons of killing Matthew and ending the existence of Gray Associates:

Pro - Stealing Gray Associates' client data. Possession would give the Five Families enough information to attack and take over the businesses of the other races, particularly the Demons. Vampires would own the city.

Pro - Revenge. In the early 2000s there was a spate of television shows, books, and movies romanticizing Vampirism. As more and more Normals began to seek out Vampires to "explore the lifestyle," Angelic suspicions became aroused. Despite being Mixed, as one of very few computer savvy Angels, her future

boss Matthew had put together a team to follow the money. He hired Michael, an IT beast, and discovered Vampires were sponsoring most of the media blitz in order to attract "new blood." The ensuing brief, but decisive, war resulted in the hated '06 Accords. So, besides gaining invaluable information, killing Matthew and destroying Gray Associates would provide payback. She smiled to herself, thinking of the restoration of Vampire feeding rights.

Pro - Not having to tolerate inferiors. Though Gray Associates' diversity policy was largely responsible for her current employment status (she even had a 401K, whatever that was), she hated being around the various Daytimers, Normals, Mixes and the rest of the subspecies. They acted as if they thought they were her equals. Morons.

Looking in her full length mirror, she remembered the Normals being surprised at seeing her refreshing her makeup in the restroom mirror. Evidently, some Normals still believed Vampires couldn't be seen in mirrors. How ridiculous was that? And she'd overheard two Goblin girls talking. Goblins actually liked living in the sewers. Who knew? She'd also overheard rumors of a serial killer sucking Goblin girls dry. Good. A minor decline in the Goblin population wouldn't bother anyone except the Goblins, and maybe not even them. Working with weirdos, or W3 as her sister Cheryl called it, was certainly educational, if nothing else.

Pro - Killing Matthew, her boss. He was Mixed, which was disgusting, but she was adapting to it. It didn't help that he was predominately Angel, her natural enemy. Oh, he was good looking enough, and had the Angel physique, but he was the epitome of every nerd, geek, and dweeb there ever was. He liked history, science fiction, fantasy, and was even a gamer! All that on top of being a CPA (Certified Public Accountant, she had learned). And his ties... Some of them might be as old as he was. She called him cheap, but he claimed he was "value oriented." She smiled thinking about his innocence. It would be fun seducing him. She'd never had an Angel before, not even a Mixed.

Con - Killing Matthew. Too bad he had to die. He was actually pretty sweet, in his own boring way. She hated to admit it, but she was starting to find him attractive, despite, or maybe because of his innocence. Unfortunately, Angel Boy had looks and brains, but his priorities were totally wrong. His whole "the races should tolerate each other and try to get along" philosophy was ridiculous. Vampires were supreme and meant to rule. The rest were meant to serve and provide sustenance. It wasn't difficult to understand, but Matthew just didn't get it. Or refused to get it. Anyhow, Louis Gabriel wanted the information in Gray Associates' files, and she knew Mr. Goody Two Wings well enough to know his Angel idealism wouldn't allow for negotiation. So death it had to be.

Con — The money was good. The Gray Associates compensation package was excellent, though she didn't really need the dental package. She was earning enough that she could start saving for a down payment on a house. Make that a condo. The daylight issue prohibited yard work, but that was really just an excuse. She wasn't the maintenance type. But if she was serious about that down payment, she might want to review her clothing budget. Or not. Her crypt was meeting most of her temporary needs just fine. She was tired of the Bobby "Boris" Pickett comments from her sisters, though. The meanness of Normal females paled when compared to that of a jealous Lady Vampire. Perhaps she should list losing their envy as another Con.

Con - She didn't want to go back to working in a club. Having to work at night, and because of their looks, many Lady Vampires were employed by Demon club and bar owners as hostesses, servers, and

dancers, not to mention the less savory occupations. As Matthew's Night Manager, she could dress to satisfy her own tastes, within the scope of her assignment.

She gently lifted the lid of the sarcophagus. Near her pillow was her Valentine's Day gift to Matthew. She knew he wouldn't understand the message being sent by the bloody, plastic wrapped heart. "Your enemy's heart in return for your heart," was way too subtle for Numbers Guy. She made a quick mental note to ask before she killed him why he hated French Poodles. For someone so predictable, he could be pretty strange. Next to the poodle heart was the Demon Blessed dagger Louis Gabriel had provided.

All she had to do was get Matthew naked and slide the blade into his heart. He wouldn't be the first creature she had tempted down into her crypt. The trick was to give them an excuse to do what they secretly desired. Matthew liked oriental carpets, perhaps she should invest in a couple Tabriz rugs and invite him down. Did they go with her Wedgwood Fairyland Lustre? No matter, it would be the excuse he needed to allow himself to come down the steps. Candles? Neither of them needed the light, but Matthew was a big enough romantic that he might become more amenable.

She threw the shoes she would wear to go dancing later into her travel bag and took a last look around before locking up. Once, the idea of hanging Matthew's wings above the clothes racks would have delighted her. Now, she wasn't sure. Could an Angel be "taken" and "turned?" Having Matthew be hers would be so much preferable to killing him. She should ask Louis Gabriel. And she had to stop thinking about her wedding dress.