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Sympathy for the Devil

by Dan Judd

Bloodbeast 3 Britain's premier horror convention was to be held at the Thistle, a generic hotel, on a roundabout, somewhere near Slough. It could be anywhere, thought Kate Mendoza, when she checked out the website. All purple, mirrors and giddy carpet.

Turning into the drop-off point she recalled the excitement she felt the first time she went to Bray Studios. At 21, Kate was far from naive. She knew what she'd been hired for, but it was still her first major role. And she didn't die until 42 minutes 10 seconds in.

Fast forward 50 years and Kate hoped the sunglasses and a turban she'd carefully chosen screamed 'leave me alone', but fortunately they weren't needed. The great unwashed hadn't arrived yet and the organiser was thankfully busy. A big gin and tonic and a long bath awaited.

"Alexis, play me the trailer for Vixens Must Die!"

She forgot to add, "the UK version," and cringed as there she was all heaving buxom and gnashing teeth dubbed badly with a cut glass RP accent.

"Even technology hates me," she mused, remembering her outrage when her agent sheepishly told her that her voice wasn't what the American producers were looking for.

"Alexis, read me my last email from The Hammer Horrors."

As the efficient and perky voice rattled through her schedule for tomorrow, Kate poured herself a big Hendricks with the merest splash of tonic. One thing she had learned was to bring her own booze as the bar would be packed.

She'd also learned to pick out a few near normals and home in on them, screen her and let them do the buying.

Funny, she was sure she was supposed to gather in the green room an hour earlier. She kicked off her high-heels, plumped up her pillows and settled into a night of Emmerdale and Celebrity MasterChef. She'd kill for the call-up for either of those shows, but the old Devil's out of fashion. She sighed and reached for the Black Magic.

The morning came along with a breakfast tray at 8am. She soon gave up on it and set upon augmenting the large tomato juice to produce a Bloody Mary. She didn't want to come across as an aged lush, but it set her up for the day ahead and it was the name of her first top of the bill movie, after all.

Stepping into her outfit, she admired herself in the full-length mirror. Less sacrificial virgin more Queen of the living dead, she thought and waited for a knock. She'd try, to be nice to Jane or was it Julia? Whoever it was she looked flustered, but then she always did.

"You've missed the rehearsal. There's no time now, you'll just have to go on."

"Darh-ling, years in rep, I'm quite practiced in turning up and hitting my mark."

"From what I remember, I just have to recoil in horror as some failed actor grabs two candle sticks then shoots me. What could possibly go wrong?"

Waiting behind the black curtain she was impressed with what they'd done to the place. Drapes, flats and candles gave it a gothic, 80s pop video vibe.

On being announced she stepped on to the stage to a roar. She then spotted Gareth at the end of a platform jutting out, bedecked with a long dining table.

On cue, she recoiled as Van, the man leapt on to the table and did his posturing. The crowd whooped and no doubt sweated a bit, as she rose again.

And then Gareth reached for the gun.

The papers would report that no live ammunition had been loaded. But that didn't explain why a silver bullet had lodged itself just short of her heart. 71 wasn't a bad innings, and no one could have spotted the maddest fan in a sea of them.

At least she hadn't died in one of her costumes, shagging Gareth, Kate thought, as she later relaxed in another bath. She had briefly flirted with the idea of haunting the bar, but being unable to have a drink would probably kill her.