

Dates from Hell

by [Kat Avila](#)

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Publisher

Avon Books

<http://www.avonbooks.com>

Credits

Author: Kim Harrison, Lynsay Sands, Kelly Armstrong, Lori Handeland

ISBN: 0-06-085409-X

Illustrator:

Grade: 8

Do women like to *read* about sex more than they like *looking* at it? After I finished an advance readers edition of the paranormal romance collection *Dates from Hell*, I dug out my *Playgirl* and *Men* "art reference" magazines. Hmmm.

But back to *Dates from Hell*. I wouldn't have minded introductory splash pages to each of the four stories: Kim Harrison's vampiric "Undead in the Garden of Good and Evil," Lynsay Sands's shape-shifter "The Claire Switch Project," Kelley Armstrong's wolfey "Chaotic," and Lori Handeland's demons-love-virgins "Dead Man Dating." **Avon Books'** choo-choo of love is pulled out of the station by Harrison's mature, sophisticated storytelling to end subduedly with Handeland's "new-voice" caboose.

"Kisten shook, his grip faltering as sexual and blood rapture filled them both."

— "Undead in the Garden of Good and Evil," by Kim Harrison

Of the four stories, Harrison's story is the most suspenseful and welcome, since it embraces a stubborn, ambitious college-educated vampire who has to rely on her own resources to extricate herself from under her conniving boss's thumb (no gallant office knight suddenly galloping out to save the day). Twenty-three-year-old Ivy Tamwood, a living vampire of a kind who won't turn into ash in the sun, is putting in time in the homicide division of Inderland Security. Her immediate obstacle to advancement is her boyishly handsome senior partner Art, an infinitely patient, undead vampire who wants to sate himself with her blood.

"You look exactly like her. *Exactly*," Jill breathed with awe. "Right down to her clothes."

— "The Claire Switch Project," by Lynsay Sands

Sands's story was unexpectedly humorous. A surprising side effect from a hijacked science experiment gives victim Claire Beckett the ability to become whomever she wants. However, all she really desires to be is fellow scientist Kyle Lockhart's girl. The ending is a stiff and long punch line.

"I was just thinking I've never seen a woman who looked so beautiful in dirt and cobwebs."

— "Chaotic," by Kelley Armstrong

Armstrong's story is both suspenseful and full of humor. There are twists that keep you guessing as to who the bad guys are. Pity half-demon Hope who's stuck with a terribly boring date at a museum gala, thanks to her mom. The action starts to pick up when Hope accidentally backs into a stranger to moan for who may later become her second date for the night. Werewolves aren't necessarily evil, even if some are unapologetic thieves.

"He's in your head now. He'll haunt you. He'll make you so insane with lust you'll have no choice but to —.

— "Dead Man Dating," by Lori Handeland

Handeland's story starts off promising but quickly gets predictable; it would have worked better with tighter editing. Demon hunter and illegal alien Chavez's task is to protect one of the few remaining virgins in the U.S.

I occasionally read Nora Roberts. Karen Marie Moning's sexy ***The Immortal Highlander*** introduced me to paranormal romances (the man-skin covers of the ***Highlander*** series will make you salivate). Even if you don't read romance novels much, the 400-page paranormal romance sampler ***Dates from Hell*** is a relaxing distraction. On-sale date is listed as March 28, 2006.

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