

Death By Vampire by Christina Engela

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Death By Vampire

Imagine, if you will:

It was six thirty in the evening, and all through the house, the blissful silence was disturbed only by the sounds of a body being dragged unceremoniously across a carpet.

The drag-*ee*, a middle-aged ashen-skinned man of whom it could be said, had – that is, in the past tense – good taste in clothes, was being dragged by the left ankle by a surprisingly petite brunette who seemed (aside from her obviously implied physical strength) if anything, indifferent. There were raw looking bite marks in his carotid, which still wept green ever so slightly, leaving a very faint green smear on the cheap cut-pile rug and blending rather well with the red-brown print. Clearly he hadn't had a very nice day. The drag-*er* on the other hand, seemed to be having an okay sort of day, and was in a particularly good mood as she replayed the events of the day inside her thoughts. If she could manage it, she would be whistling a cheerful tune right now – past her extended fangs.

How had this very interesting and surreal domestic scene come about? Well, funny you should ask. A few hours earlier, she had met the drag-*ee* – that's right, the fella lying face-down on the carpet – the one with almost no green – er, blood left in him, and *that*, really is where this story begins.

"I shouldn't make decisions when I'm in this frame of mind." Said Lirian Nimah concisely, tilting her head at the source of her frustration. "I might need that shovel I keep in the trunk."

A wry little smile rounded off the veiled threat, playing on her finely sculpted lips cautiously – as though it were tap-dancing across a minefield and might be obliterated at the slightest misstep.

Ignoring the serious gravity of her mood which shone through her deceptive courtesy and 'manners', Atreya Vandalwa, a self-described interplanetary man of mystery, secret double-

agent between the planets Vorg and Jim-wa, his own personal superhero – and coincidentally the source of her frustration – frowned.

“Well, it’s your choice. Take it, or leave it.” Vandalwa replied dismissively. He had just made her what he thought was quite a reasonable offer: a million credits in uncut Nubian blood-diamonds, or death for a hundred Terran hostages of the Jim-waian Revolutionary Army. It’s not as if the Terran Empire couldn’t afford it.

“I’m told the Crusaders like to cut off the heads of their hostages. They record it and post the captures on the interweb for the whole galaxy to enjoy.” He observed casually, stroking his chin, the darker grey tone of his fingers contrasting slightly with the moderately fairer grey skin of his chiseled jaw. “Their blood is green, you see – and so they find the red blood of Terrans to be ... quite... fascinating.”

“Yes. I’m sure they do.” Lirian replied acidly, her eyes narrowing, almost imperceptibly in the shadow and dim light of the *Insug’h Bahss* – a Jim-waian café on the corner of Lupus and Grain streets, lower down-town center of Atro City, capital of Deanna.

The curvaceous script of *Sivhar*, the dominant script of Jim-waian society, and the language in which their ubiquitous holy scriptures were written, decorated the inner walls of the establishment, painted on with the seeming loving care and fearfully attentive dedication of scribes – scribes who believed they would suffer an eternity in an arid, flaming afterlife without any virgins if they spelled a word wrong, or put a dot in the wrong position. She recognized the smaller markings between the words, which indicated verse-markers – and indicated to Lirian that these were verses quoted from the *Shivar Nahgur’at* – the ‘*Book of All Ages*’. The thought occurred to Lirian, an unrepentant atheist, that religious materials likely to inspire people to blow themselves up or fly star ships into space-stations – which in her view included pretty much *all* of them – should be rated ‘R’.

Jim-wa was a planet far from the street-café on Deanna, and the Jim-waians working here – all identifiable by their unmistakable gray skin tones, even if they weren’t wearing their traditional *seri-pha* (a kind of woven head-scarf) – were alien to this world. But then, this was Deanna, a Terran colony – and since the colony itself was only about half a century old, everyone on it was technically an *alien*.

“So you really want to hold the Terran Empire to ransom over a couple of stones?” She said candidly, looking into his dark eyes. “That’s why you’re holding a hundred embassy workers hostage, isn’t it?”

“A hundred *dead* embassy workers.” Said Vandalwa pointedly. “*If* I do not receive payment in good time.”

Lirian knew only too well that a hundred hostages meant that the interweb could become the stage for about a hundred interesting video clips on the JRA’s public channel.

“People with families, people who care about them – their lives don’t mean anything to you?”

“But no – their lives mean a great deal to the Revolutionary Army of Jim-wa.” Vandalwa intoned in a way that Lirian had been instructed meant the same as human condescension. He was toying with her, and in a way that she felt indicated was something like a child playing with a firecracker just moments before it would blow his fingers off.

“Yeah.” Lirian said, almost sneering. “A million credits-worth, right?”

Vandalwa just bowed his gray head and opened his slightly paler gray hands in a show of agreement. Putting away her emotional content was not always easy, but then there were a hundred lives riding on this clandestine meeting. One hundred Terran lives – human beings – locked up in a dungeon somewhere by the Jim-waian Revolutionary Army, called ‘Crusaders’ by the Agency, and just about everyone else. But the JRA didn’t use a cross as its symbol – not exactly. It was more like a stylized ‘X’ with a dot in the corner of each ‘v’ of the shape. Rather like the pendant Vandalwa was wearing around his neck. She could detect his pulse, under that gray skin, from *here*. What Jim-waian blood tasted like, she had no idea – but from his scent, she guessed something like a moss and celery smoothie. Pale and thin – and it gave her goose bumps just thinking about it. But oh well, prana is prana, she supposed. Even if it is green.

She enjoyed the red blood of Terrans too, in her own freakish way. After all, it had been a few days since she had last had some, and being a *hungry* secret vampire tended to have a bit of a crimping effect on – well, on what could laughingly be called ‘her good nature’ – and her self-control at times like this. Being an operative for the Colonial Intelligence Agency – a special department of the Terran government – provided favorable opportunities for her to satisfy her vampyric needs without too many questions being asked. For Lirian, vampire, agent, her job was more than just a job. It was also more than just a job with perks that would allow her to occasionally slake her thirst for blood – it was an opportunity to slake her thirst for justice. She looked forward to completing this mission. Very much – and then heading back home afterward... back home to Threatening Manor.

She reached into her coat pocket and produced a small black pouch containing the diamonds. She wordlessly dropped it on the table with a solid weighty thud. Vandalwa reached out for it, his fingers almost seeming to stroke the velvety cloth as if it were a cat, and emptied the stones into the palm of one hand. Ten beautiful blood-green stones sparkled in the dim lighting. A hundred thousand credits apiece, each one for ten Terran hostages. They couldn’t be forged or copied, not even by a transmatter replication device – something about the atomic structure interfered with the process. This made them even *more* valuable. Funny how that worked. Mined on the planet Nubia, they weren’t called ‘blood diamonds’ because anyone died mining them... they had that name because they were the color of the blood of several species – green blood – like the Jim-waians. He produced a small device from the other hand, as if by magic, and scanned the contents of the package. Satisfied that there were no bugs or trackers attached to any of the stones or the bag, he poured them back into it, and dropped the lot into his coat pocket.

“Thank you, Ms. Nimah.” Vandalwa said condescendingly. “As soon as my people hear from me, your people will be released. That will be all. Good day.”

She watched as the tall alien rose and left the table, pausing a moment to watch him walk down the aisle of the establishment. Then she smiled.

It seemed Mr. Vandalwa had the notion that he could disappear before she could follow him... or didn't think that she would even try. To call herself '*underestimated*', was an understatement. She was a vampire after all. Of course, he didn't actually know that. Frankly, she had no idea if the Jimwaians had any vampire legends of their own – or vampires for that matter. Following his movements was a matter of skipping lightly and unseen along a row of rooftops as Vandalwa made his way cautiously on foot along the busy late afternoon/early evening streets of Atro City. Once satisfied he wasn't being pursued, he stopped glancing round quite as much, and seemed to relax. After a good few minutes walking, he entered a section of town that played home to a lot of non-human inhabitants. He turned in at a garden gate at a small tenement house, and walked up to the door, unlocked it and went inside.

As the latch clacked shut behind him, behind the closed wood and glass door, he relaxed even more, and grinned broadly. He let his coat slide off his shoulders and flipped it onto a coat-hook in the hall. Tossing the pouch into the air and catching it with the other hand, he walked into the lounge of his small lodgings. His keen eyes caught the motion of the lace curtain as it stirred in front of the open ground floor window. He froze instantly, looking round and listening. He hadn't left that open! There was nothing to be seen or heard. Pouch of riches dangling from his left hand, he deftly pulled a small flat knife from the wrist strap with the right hand, and eyes wide, began carefully looking round the room, circling a floral sofa with his back to it.

Suddenly, seemingly out of thin air, Lirian Nimah materialized at his side – firmly holding his knife-hand in a vice-like grip, immobilizing it. Her smile was sharp and fanged, sharper than even his knife, or his wit – and she had something of a homicidal sort of look about her.

“Well hello there.” She greeted, looking into his mad, suddenly terrified eyes. He screamed all the while as she tore into his throat and quickly drained him.

His 'people' at the JRA wouldn't hear from him, no matter how loudly he screamed. She was satisfied with the knowledge that the hostages had already been located by the Agency and were due to be rescued an hour ago, while she was meeting this 'model citizen'. Her job had been to distract the JRA's agent – Vandalwa – and through him, the JRA itself, while the rescue operation was underway. After that, mister Vandalwa was... a liability. The Terran government didn't take invasions of its embassies lightly, and they didn't play around with terrorists and would-be hostage-takers and religious fundamentalist maniacs with a yen for threats. No, that was *her* part – and she always did her part.

“Urgh.” She grimaced, swallowing heavily – her lips and chin dripping green as she allowed the dead weight to sink to the floor. “You taste like... copper... and...” she pursed her lips and noisily licked her fangs – “Old sponge!”

In order to make Vandalwa's demise look a little less like murder and more like an accident, Lirian picked up one foot and dragged the former Mr. Vandalwa to the middle of the floor, turning the body and positioning it so that it seemed he had collapsed face-down. She picked up his knife and put that carefully back into his wrist strap. Then she retrieved the small black velvet pouch containing the blood-green diamonds from his still clenched hand, flipped it into the air and caught it. That would be going back to the Agency, of course. She reached behind the sofa for the can of gasoline she'd found standing in the kitchen, and very quickly, sprayed it all over the body, the walls, the ceiling and the furniture. She lit a disposable lighter, and threw it onto the body. The fire ignited with a dull *whoosh*, instantly becoming a roaring, crackling – and spreading inferno.

'Let forensics make of that mess whatever they will', she thought. She didn't care what they came up with as a motive or cause of death. Whatever the outcome, they always seemed to discount *'death by vampire'* as a possibility.

"Thank you, mister Vandalwa. That will be all." She smiled at the blazing corpse, before leaving by the front door, while humming a tune to herself.

THE END

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Thanks!

Christina Engela

About the Author



Christina Engela is one of South Africa's most unique and skilled storytellers, having written 13 novellas in three science fiction series, and also several non-fiction titles. Best known for her realistic characterization and for casting fully-fleshed-out LGBT characters in leading roles, Christina brings her wealth of personal experience to each of her stories. With several new offerings already in the pipeline, including several standalone titles, 2020 is bound to be a busy year for her fans!

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