

The Wedding Anniversary

It was Valentines Day and their first wedding anniversary. Her excitement palpable she couldn't wait until tonight's special dinner. He was good at the little things, the things that mattered. Erin felt so lucky to be his wife. She had taken off from work today so she could pamper herself and get ready for her romantic evening with him.

Her best friend, Paige, was great. Since their college days they had been inseparable. Paige helped her cope with the stress of school and work, especially during the wedding planning; making sure Erin kept it together. Erin could always count on her; even today, Paige had taken off so that they could share a day of pampering.

They had spent hours at the spa getting full body massages and matching manicures. Erin got a new hair cut at Paige's behest. Later, Paige helped her get the house in order and turn her bedroom into a boudoir. The bed looked inviting with its dark red satin bedspread and decorative pillows. Small votive candles were spread throughout the room that she would later light to set the mood. The sparkling wine was chilling in an ice bucket on the night stand next to two glasses and the chocolate truffles.

The day had gone by in a whirlwind. Erin had focused so much on setting the romantic mood in their bedroom and looking forward to dinner at the very expensive restaurant he had gotten reservations for, that she never had a chance to think about what to wear.

Again, Paige came through for her when she surprised her with a red dress. It had little red rhinestones on the neckline and the edge of the long sleeves. The dress was very modest except for the slit on the right leg that went up a bit higher than Erin was comfortable with. After she was dressed, Paige looked at her with what they had dubbed the "Paige Stamp of Approval". Andrew was pleased and quite surprised at her transformation.

Dinner was exceptional. The restaurant overlooked the river and the sight of the city at night was both beautiful and romantic. The soft music of the violin serenade played in the background as lost in each other's eyes, he professed his love - her hands held in his, their meal forgotten. They chose Valentines Day as their wedding day because it is the day to celebrate love and they wanted to celebrate their love for years to come. To them, it meant more than a day to give roses and chocolate.

A bit tipsy she giggled as they entered the house, Andrew steadied her against the wall as he closed the door. She took off her shoes at the bottom of the stairs and told him to get the lighter from the kitchen while she changed into something more comfortable. He wiggled his eyebrows bowing to her command and she continued to giggle on her way up the stairs.

Once in her bedroom she changed quickly and realized that she had left the lighter on the dresser. She lit the votive candles moving as fast as she could to surprise Andrew. Just as she finished lighting the last votive, she heard a gurgling sound and turned to find that Andrew was standing just inside the bedroom. Smiling, she walked over to him and wrapped her arms around his neck. Andrew coughed up blood as he collapsed in her arms. Erin didn't understand what was happening and not being able to sustain Andrew's weight, he fell to the floor knocking her down with him. "Andrew! Andrew!"

"He's dead." A woman's voice told her

Erin looked up to see Paige standing there with a bloody butcher knife in her hand. "Paige? What are you doing here? Help me...Andrew."

Her tears flowed freely, deep down she knew what Paige had said was true, Andrew was dead. But it didn't make sense, how could it have happened? It's their anniversary, they're in love.

Paige is in the house, there's a knife in her hand...

"You don't need him. You've never needed him. You have me. I've always taken care of you."

"What are you saying Paige? You killed my husband!" Erin shrieked still on the bedroom floor holding on to Andrew.

Paige walked up to Erin the butcher knife still in hand and knelt down beside her. Erin tried to scuttle away, but Andrew lay on her lap and his weight held her down. Paige smiled, reached out and caressed her hair. Erin flinched from her touch, sobbing.

"You were my best friend. How could you do this to me? I love him!"

"I love you!" Paige shrieked "I've always loved you! Ever since the day we first met in college! I will never leave you Erin. We're meant to be together!" Paige grabbed Erin's hair, twisted it in her fist and dropped the butcher knife to shove Andrew off of her lap.

"Paige you're my friend, my best friend. That's what you've always been to me. You know I've always loved Andrew."

"He didn't deserve you!" Paige stood up dragging Erin by her hair. "You belong to me. You can't do anything without me!" She continued to drag Erin by the hair. Erin got a hold of Paige's other hand and fought to free herself from her grip.

"I don't belong to you! I don't love you! Not in that way. Let me go!" The two women pushed and pulled at each other crashing against the dresser. Paige trying to keep control of Erin, and Erin trying to get away from Paige. Several vases were knocked over as the two women fought and the room slowly caught fire.

"If I can't have you nobody will!" Paige's hands took hold of Erin's neck and squeezed. Erin gasped for air, but Paige sat on her stomach and kept squeezing Erin's neck - banging her head on the floor to emphasize her words. "Do you hear me? No one! You're mine!"

The fire continued to spread and the room was enveloped in smoke. Erin saw the butcher knife on the floor and reached for it, but Paige saw her and released her hold to go for the knife. Erin coughed from the smoke; Paige fell to her knees unable to breathe. The flames consumed the bed like a pyre that fanned the inferno throughout. The intense blaze seared the ceiling spreading tendrils of flame arching over the walls encircling them in a prison of fire.

She crawled towards the knife as Paige had begun to reach for it. Paige turned and overpowered her again resuming the strangle hold. Erin struggled to push Paige off and free herself. Paige coughed, eyes tearing and nose running. Desperately, Erin reached out to the floor and her fingers grabbed hold of the butcher knife. Paige maniacally blocked her attempts at defense. Her feverish glare locked onto Erin's eyes as she pinned her down.

With the last of her strength, as she lost consciousness from the scorching smoke, Erin swung the knife through the side of Paige's ribs, piercing her heart. Paige collapsed on top of Erin locked in death's embrace as the fire burned.