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Even if it takes an eternity, he will make amends...."Picture Perfect"

Cordelia has a vision of a young child being attacked by a squid-like demon at the same time that Gunn is rescuing a young artist whose studio has been attacked by vampires. When Cordelia goes to investigate the mansion of her vision, she finds herself surrounded by baby products, portraits...and chased by a many-tentacled monster.

When Angel arrives on the scene, he's shocked to discover that he recognizes some of the subjects of the portraits. Distant memories of a night spent with storytellers Mary and Percy Shelley recall an artist Darla, his longtime paramour and partner in crime, once favored. But can that artist still be alive today?

An ancient evil is using a painting to keep its body alive and intact, and in the meantime is preying on a child. In the process of saving the child, Cordelia, Angel, Gunn, and Wesley are going to learn -- the hard way -- that looks aren't everything.

### Image Details

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## From Reader Review Image for online ebook

### John Kirk says

This is the first *Angel* novel I've read, although I previously read one of Mel Odom's short stories in *Tales of the Slayer*, Volume 1. That story was ok, although I think it squandered its potential. It involved a German who became a Watcher during the Great War, and I'd be interested to know how the Watchers handled their divided loyalties, i.e. loyalty to their countries vs their shared cause, but the story didn't address that at all.

As for this novel, I think the basic story could have been made into a reasonable episode of the series; not one of my all-time favourites, but something that I'd be happy to spend an hour watching. However, it was let down by sloppy writing, so I get the impression that everyone concerned just wanted to shove this thing out of the door as soon as possible, rather than taking the time to proof-read it properly.

(view spoiler)

According to the comics, Superman was born on Krypton (which has a red sun), and gained superpowers when he came to Earth (with a yellow sun). So, Cordelia's reference is quite correct. However, I don't think she's the type of person who would know that. It would be a great line coming from Xander, but in this case it's just been glued onto the nearest character.

There's also some pretty clunky dialogue here. For instance, here's Wesley talking to someone on the phone (p243):

"No," Wesley assured the man. "I wouldn't want our agency's reputation tarnished. Yes, I understand there is a lot of work that can be done in this city by a reputable investigations and security firm. Of course I'd like to see Angel Investigations be that firm."

Now imagine how that conversation would sound if you could hear both sides of it:

Man: "Do you want your agency's reputation tarnished?"

Wesley: "No, I wouldn't want our agency's reputation tarnished."

Man: "You do understand, there's a lot of work that can be done in this city by a reputable investigations and security firm?"

Wesley: "Yes, I understand there is a lot of work that can be done in this city by a reputable investigations and security firm."

Man: "And would you like Angel Investigations to be that firm?"

Wesley: "Of course I'd like to see Angel Investigations be that firm."

Parroting everything like that makes him sound like a complete idiot. The only reason for that is to help the reader fill in the blanks, because if Wesley said "No ... Yes ... Of course" then you wouldn't know what the client had said. In a play, that might be excusable, where there's no easy way to show both ends of the conversation, but in a book I expect the writer to take advantage of the medium.

A couple of pages later, Angel figures out who is responsible for the blackmail (in the B plot), but refuses to tell the others. This makes no sense in the context of the story, so the meta-reason is clearly that the writer wants to keep the readers in suspense a bit longer. I wonder whether there's an antonym for "exposition"? If so, that term would apply here.

Then there's the issue of product placement. In TV/film, it's a bit tricky, because it seems a bit bizarre for characters to live in a world without recognisable brands (i.e. the companies who haven't paid for advertising). In books, there's a bit more flexibility, so you can refer to items without giving an exact description. For instance, you could say that someone is drinking coffee, without needing to show/hide a corporate logo on the cup. Bearing that in mind, consider chapter 19 (pp252-254):

Fatigue pulled at Cordelia's eyelids, threatening to close them. She shook herself back to wakefulness, then reached for the Starbucks cup in front of her. When she picked it up, she noticed that it was empty.

[...]

She turned her attention back to the book, tried the empty Starbucks cup again, then stood up.

[...]

Cordelia thought that food with her Starbucks coffee would complement each other.

Is the writer being paid to advertise Starbucks? Can we expect more of this in future books, where the characters spend a few pages comparing notes on which brand of laundry detergent works best on demon slime?

Another problem is where the writer couldn't be bothered to keep track of his "props". In chapter 21, there's a flashback to Geneva in 1816, where Angelus and Darla are staying with Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft (later to become Mrs Shelley), etc. Angelus goes wandering in the night, and witnesses a demon confrontation in a cellar. Mary Wollstonecraft also witnesses this, and faints. According to the book (p281):

The cellar hatch opened abruptly and Gabriel dropped down, still holding onto the candle. He stared at Angelus, who held the sword and the shoe.

Hang on, what shoe? I went back and re-read the previous few pages, and there's no mention of Angelus carrying a shoe when he entered the cellar, or picking one up while he was there. On the following page, it turns out that this is Mary's shoe, but there's no mention of her dropping it. In a comic, I'd accept this, because each panel is a frozen moment in time and the reader is expected to fill in the blanks between them. In a book it would have been easy to just add one line, saying that Mary's shoe fell off; however, the writer

clearly couldn't be bothered, and nor could his editor. (hide spoiler)]

I realise that I'm nitpicking, but if there are enough small niggles like this then they do add up. Overall, I may read more of Odom's short stories if they come up in anthologies, but I'll give his novels a miss from now on.

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### **Mikana says**

For fans of the tv show. I loved these books, the Angel series was terrific.

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### **Randy says**

Not the best Angel book, kind of boring. But it was nice to see my favorite characters back in action all the same.

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### **Michelle Cristiani says**

Nice Angelus flashbacks...reminded me of Highlander a little.

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