

Samantha Hunt

CURES

1998 + 2

In 1998 there was a woman who traveled around the world re-programming computers. The computers had been encoded to process data occurring only in the twentieth century and now their internal calendar was nearing 00, nothing nothing. She was called a year 2000 programmer even directly to her face. For instance, a receptionist would announce her, "Louie, that year 2000 programmer's out front," and Louie would eventually appear from around the corner, "Hi there. You're the year 2000 programmer?" he'd ask. "Yes." Louie would lead her down the hallway to the network room. He would show her off to various strangers passing on their way to coffee breaks. He'd gesture in her direction, "Year 2000," he'd say as though she herself were from the future. She had come to realize that her title was a word like "bur-lap," a descriptive term that people enjoyed repeating out loud.

In the northern California town where she'd lived before realizing the financial boon in people's fears concerning the approaching chaos, there had been one man. One man paired with two women of which she was the second and so "the other." The man she loved was married to a woman who owned a hat shop. The shop also sold sunglasses and socks, all items that the programmer had at one time or another received as gifts from the man. She found it odd but also recognized the practicality in his gifts. He told her that as an adolescent he'd lied to his parents, telling them that he had been abducted by an old man with out-of-state plates and that the man had made him pose for perverted pictures among the nitrous oxide tanks in a party supply warehouse. In actuality he'd admitted to her he had spent the afternoon in an Oakland laundromat watching, "Three's Company." He said that he had enjoyed the attention during the police investigation.

Her cure for love involved people like Louie. From the network room in hundreds of various offices around the world, she would make outrageous demands because nobody understood exactly what it was that she was doing.

The operation for re-programming a computer's calendar was nothing complex but she found it simple to create a frenzy, people wanted a frenzy around the work she was doing. "Shh!" she'd scream if someone entered the room or "Quick! I need a torque wrench and a glass of water," as though she were changing the computer's oil. She found it possible to demand almost anything particularly of middle management men. It wasn't kind but it made her feel better. It also made her feel better to talk about the dangers of the year 2000. How everything from the Pentagon down to fax machines would probably fail at the stroke of midnight. It made her feel better to tell strangers, "As an adolescent I was abducted by an old man with out-of-state plates." In the same way that it made her feel better to invite the men from whatever office she was stationed in back to her hotel two at a time. She'd flatter and encourage one so blatantly that the other would be forced to leave. And she'd imagine this man on his lonely ride home. He'd feel embarrassed to be thirty-five, single, and driving a station wagon back from a hotel that was located out of town, out near the highway.