

The Wrong Drink"
by Kay Derwydd

"I said rose *hips*, not Rose *Lips*, you idiot!" Alastaire turned to the middle-aged woman who stood beside his moronic assistant. "I'm sorry, ma'am. My assistant tends to get a bit confused at times."

The woman smacked the gum in her mouth and gave him a lascivious grin. "No problem, darlin'. Can I help you with anythin' while I'm here?" Alastaire noticed the gap between her two front teeth and swallowed the bile in his throat.

"No thank you, but I'll gladly pay you for the time you've wasted in following this dolt here." He handed her a wad of bills and flinched when she made a point to slide her fingers along his as she took the money.

"Anytime, darlin'. If you need somethin' later, just holler. Everyone knows Rose Lips 'round here."

He watched her walk away and feigned retching as she took care to wiggle a flabby butt his way. He turned to glower at the man beside him. The apologetic grin on the man's face was comical enough to make Alastaire forget he was angry. He rolled his eyes and returned to his potion brewing in the copper kettle. He gave it a good stir with a metal spoon and turned to his assistant.

"Now, do you think you can go get me some rose hips?" he asked as he fished out another bit of money from the pocket of his apron. The man in front of him nodded. "Very good. This should be enough. Hurry back, as this potion isn't going to wait all day for them."

"Yes, master," the man said. He turned to head out the door.

"Oh, and Feldman?"

"Yes, master?"

"No more women please."

Feldman grinned and nodded. "Yes, master."

Alastaire turned back to the potion and left Feldman to do his job. He paid the man well and even included free room and board on top of that. It was a small price to pay to be able to completely avoid the bustle of London. He had set his shop of potions up not far from downtown and the herb shop he frequented was only a few doors down. It was convenient, even if it wasn't quiet. A few minutes later, Feldman returned with a plastic bag filled with rose hips. He handed the change and the bag to Alastaire.

"Thank you. Now I need you to..." Alastaire stopped and looked at Feldman. "Wasn't your hump on the other side?"

"What hump?"

Alastaire shook his head and continued. "I need you to get me some water started boiling. Keep an eye on it, as I need to steep the hips and use the tincture in the potion."

Feldman went to the sink and filled up another copper pot with hot water. He set it on the stove and leaned over to peer into the water. Alastaire looked over at him and nearly dropped his spoon into the potion kettle.

"What are you doing?"

Feldman looked over, but didn't move from his precarious position. "Keeping an eye on it. I can't very well take my eye out, but I'm doing the best I can."

Alastaire groaned and waved him away. "Off with you. I'm almost done." He carried the bag of hips to the water and dumped them in. After he gave it a good stir, he covered the pot. "It needs to boil for a few minutes. Then the tincture

will be ready to drain and I can add it to the potion." He glanced over at Feldman. "Go clean or something."

"Yes, master." Feldman wandered off, leaving Alastaire in blessed silence.

After several minutes, Alastaire took the lid off of the pot and removed the pot from the heat. He drained the water and hips over a stretch of muslin and threw the soggy hips away. He gave the resulting tincture a quick going-over to ensure there were no stray hips or pieces and then he added it to the potion in the kettle. He let it simmer for another five minutes before taking it off the heat. While it cooled, he stirred it and projected thoughts into it to charge it with its intention:

"Whosoever drinks this will develop a love so true to the first person they see."

When the potion was cooled, he poured it into a glass jar. Then he set the jar on the table to cool and went to find Feldman. He found him dusting the piano bench.

"Feldman, I need you to clean up the workshop while I shower."

"Yes, master." Feldman hurried off and Alastaire disappeared into his bedroom to get ready for his shower.

Feldman wiped the sweat from his brow as he finished sweeping under the table. He reached up to get his drink and took a hearty swallow. When he realized it didn't taste right, he looked up. He looked at the jar in his hand and then at the glass of soda sitting on the table. When he heard the door start to open, he quickly set the jar back and took a swallow of his drink.

"Very good," Alastaire said.

As Alastaire looked around, Feldman felt his heart flutter ever-so-slightly. He had never realized how truly beautiful the witch was. Alastaire's broad shoulders and well-muscled body looked absolutely delicious. Feldman unconsciously licked his lips as Alastaire moved around the room, inspecting the cleaning. *Oh how it would be lovely for him to inspect me*, Feldman thought.

Alastaire stopped his inspection and looked at his assistant. Something wasn't right. Feldman had a strange glow about him, an odd sparkle to his pale blue eyes that Alastaire had never seen. If he hadn't known better, he would've said that Feldman looked like a man in love. He shrugged and walked back out to get dressed. His towel was wet and the chill of the workshop was beginning to give him goose bumps.

Alastaire stood in front of the hall mirror and turned this way and that, making sure that nothing was left untucked or loose. He pulled his brown hair back into a ponytail and secured it with an elastic band. When he saw Feldman's reflection in the mirror, he stopped abruptly.

"Feldman? Are you feeling all right?" he asked. No matter how crazy the man drove him at times, he didn't want him to have come to any harm.

"Oh yes, master. Is there anything I can do for you, master?"

"N-nothing, right now. I just need to use the restroom and then I'll be off for the evening. You will have the night off as well." Alastaire started for the bathroom, but stopped when he realized he was being followed. "Umm, yes?"

"Perhaps I can help you," Feldman said. He reached out and Alastaire nearly jumped out of his skin when Feldman started to open his jeans.

"What are you doing?"

"Just helping, master. Here, let me get that for you." Feldman reached into Alastaire's jeans and Alastaire darted away. "Master?"

Alastaire ran into his workshop and closed the door. He could hear Feldman coming to a stop on the other side.

"Master?"

Alastaire backed up and bumped into the table. A jar rattled behind him and he turned to grab it before the potion could spill. Yet when he grabbed it, there was only a third of the original amount in the jar. His face went white as he realized what happened. Just then, the door opened and Feldman walked over to him.

"Master," Feldman whispered. "You're so hot. Here, let me get those clothes off of you."

Only one thought entered into Alastaire's mind then: *Oh shit.*