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# The Thing He LOVES



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# **THE THING HE LOVES**

by

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## **THE THING HE LOVES**

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## **The Thing He Loves**

On Tuesday mornings, I was always busy; I saved jobs for that specific purpose. Sometimes, I would be re-shelving in the Marchmont 200-300 section, which just happened to be near the main entrance. Sometimes, I was at the front desk of the archive, scanning records from the old card index into the new database. Other times, I managed to be through the glass door in the restoration area rebinding or repairing some old manuscript. Whatever I was doing, I was always somewhere within sight of the main elevator around 5:00 p.m., and I don't really think that I was fooling anyone.

The archives were in the subbasement of a discrete red brick building. The tungsten bulbs bathed it in harsh yellow light, but with spontaneous emollition in the open as my other option, I couldn't really complain about the ambience. There weren't too many jobs for a vampire in this day and age, especially with a company willing to both believe in and accommodate my unfortunate state. Anyway, the only real light of my life dawned summer and winter at 5:00 p.m. At about this time, a young elf by the name of Ferris would come in.

He looked to be in his thirties, with long, rakishly styled blond hair and a smartly casual way of dressing that fell right out of a catalogue. The Greenway Archive was a bit out of the way, and you had to be a serious witch, druid, or shaman to even know it existed. Ferris, as it happened, was undoubtedly even more uncanny than that in being an elfin emissary, albeit one in human guise. I had no idea what he really looked like beneath his glamour. I just worked here, and apart from one little quirk, there wasn't a magical bone in my body. I was a middle-aged, rather average-looking guy who did a very mundane job in a very magical place, and it took all the willpower I had to stop some of my stupider notions from getting out of control.

Today, I was stocktaking some of the books. These weren't ordinary books, so this process involved checking every single page in case somebody has slipped one out or altered it. I turned each page carefully and checked it against a PDF scan

kept in an un-networked computer. When Ferris walked in, I looked up and smiled at him. It was my policy never to say a thing to him unless he spoke first. I was deeply and irrationally in love with Ferris but I was damned if I was going to look like an idiot about it—well, like too much of an idiot. Ferris was a nice enough guy for a two-hundred-year-old elfin warrior, and I didn't want to embarrass him.

"Are any of those tinctures effective, I wonder?" he queried.

I just shrugged. I read what I looked at, of course. I even understood a fair amount of it, but only in theory. I wasn't a practitioner so I didn't really have any idea. There is a saying going around that 'in theory, theory and practice is the same thing—but in practice they're different.' That was me all over—Mr. Theory and just smart enough to know my limitations.

"The new stuff is on the yellow desk," I said as I turned the next page.

"I know that," he replied. "Anything for me?"

Ferris was a representative of the Elfin Queen. He came in each week to see anything the archive had newly acquired. It was more and more these days, eBay being what it is. The elves lost a lot of stuff a while back—dangerous stuff—and they were hoping it would turn up again. The archive staff had agreed to return any elfin manuscripts they came up with, and in return, the Elfin Queen allowed us to call on Ferris and his men if we ever needed some kind of protection.

"Nothing," I said.

I had been here for almost twenty years now, and I knew elfin script when I saw it. Ferris had to come and look all the same, just in case there was something elfin glamourised to look like something else, or to be honest, because the Elfin Queen didn't trust mere humans to do anything right.

"You could save me a bit of time if you just called this in once a week."

I wondered how long Ferris practised that oh-so-human way of speaking and acting to get it so perfect. It was almost too perfect, really. A perfect man. I wonder if that was all it was in the end—I had fallen for the image that a very clever elf had made. In that moment, it seemed all too likely. I was just that kind of fool. But it was just as well for the curse that transformed me had another aspect: if he should know of my love and returned it, he would certainly be destroyed.

The succubus I spurned had been hasty, yet thorough, in her curses: the sun, in seeing me, would burn me; the man returning my love would be destroyed. Succubae are proud and wrathful even if one's disinterest was a matter of orientation quite beyond a poor mortal's control. That Ferris would love me in return was impossible enough, but in trying to hide my feelings as best I could, I was doubly ensuring his safety.

I focused on a recipe of heart's ease—it seemed just a little too apt at the moment—and damned if it wasn't just a bit different from the PDF. I stared at it hard to make sure I wasn't seeing things. It was just a little loop of cursive script

changing “Janis” to “Janus,” but that would be an entirely different ingredient. My heart was aching away while the cogs of my mind spun. Janis deadened feelings, Janus opened doors; it would change the effect of the potion entirely.

“Steve, are you okay?”

I jumped about a foot to find Ferris leaning in so close. My gloved hand jerked, tearing the edge of the page. The head archivist actually damaging one of the books—I was mortified. Besides, this seemed like a deliberate change and I didn’t like the look of it. Somebody did this for a reason.

“Dammit, Ferris, on the yellow desk! I mean...sorry.”

I smoothed down the page and made the mistake of actually looking at him properly. I extracted myself from his gaze with heroic effort, my mind seeking any distraction from what my heart wanted to say—clichés mostly; ‘I love you’ being the worst.

\* \* \* \*

It was the depths of winter and I did a quick calculation; dusk would be well advanced, so flight was an option. The book was desk issue only and the last person to consult it was Desme Clark. There was nothing to suggest that someone made the amendment specifically to deceive her, but it made some sense to work backwards. Now if I had been thinking normally, I would simply have reported the aberration, but I needed to get out of there and I just happened to know where I would be able to find Desme. I scanned the few names on the list above hers but none of them looked familiar.

“I have other business to attend to,” I stammered. “Please just get the night porter to let you out.”

I slammed the old grimoire closed, and returned it to its usual station, but with a red tag and no card inside the sleeve so no one could borrow it. I pulled up the address cards for the last five people to consult the book of magic and grabbed my old velveteen jacket from the back of my chair. I was more than a little confounded when Ferris followed me to the lift.

“Hadn’t you better check those books?”

“They’ll be here tomorrow; I just won’t go back until then.”

“Ferris, this is probably nothing...”

“You don’t think so.”

Well, there were other things on my mind...but beneath it—no, I didn’t. I wasn’t thrilled to know he could read me that well.

“There is an alteration to the grimoire that could be very dangerous, and the last person to consult that book is an apothecary. Desme Clark runs the *Crystal Palace* front-of-house, and a potions room out back. If she’s made a bad powder, I

hate to think what might happen.”

The porter was just locking up, but she held the front door to let us out of the building. She gave me a wink, probably jumping to some hasty assumption; Kimi had been hassling me for months about my solitary ways. I went over to my little Fiesta, almost the last car in the lot. Ferris waited by the passenger side and it wasn't quite in me to tell him to piss off. I looked over the roof of the car at him.

“The elves are pledging to help whenever you might need us.”

“I don't know that you are needed at all.”

He shrugged. “But I might be.”

I unlocked the car and we both got in. It was a fairly short trip to the Crystal Palace, which was a small shop front off the main street. There was a parking space right outside and I'd hardly had time to work out what I was going to say.

The “open” sign was still up. The shop out front was full of tie-dye, tarot, and every other kind of mystical tat, but the real business was out back.

“Wait here, right?” I said, hardly expecting obedience.

However, Ferris seemed content to do as I said, pretending to browse the shelves in the book section. There was a gothed-up girl serving at the till, but nobody else in the shop. I brushed through a bead-curtained door that most people wouldn't notice and into the back room.

Desme looked up. “I've been expecting you,” she said.

“I've come to ask you about the Falver Grimoire.”

“The what?”

“Grimoire. You consulted it on Monday, and I have just discovered that it has been tampered with. I thought I had better let you know immediately.”

I sounded a little uptight even to my own ears but I wasn't keen on Desme being so sure that I needed her help. Expecting me? That seemed to imply she knew about the curse? I'd only tried having it lifted once, and what was left of that witch wouldn't fill a teacup.

“I,” she stammered, “I wasn't consulting it for trade. There's no product, I mean, that could have been effected.”

She seemed shaken. Suddenly, all my own preoccupations slipped away. Gods, but it was a relief just to worry about somebody else for a change. I glanced at the doorway but was pretty sure she must've done something to stop eavesdropping, so I pulled up a chair and sat.

“The ‘Heart's Ease’ recipe was tampered with. If you were thinking of using it, which is foolish enough, don't do it; now it might be deadly.”

Her eyes were wide and silent tears welled within them. Desme was one of those fragile looking girls that made even me want to play the knight.

“Desme, did you make those alterations? Or did you tell anyone you were intending to use that powder? Someone with reason to harm you?”

She seemed genuinely shocked. “Oh no, I would never alter the grimoire, but...I have just broken up with my girlfriend B.B. Well, actually, it’s been weeks, but I just can’t seem to move on. I was at my wits’ end. I just wanted something to dull it down.”

“B.B.?”

“Barb Barrett. She worked in the shop for, oh, almost three years before we were together—from just after I opened. I thought it was a pretty serious deal, but...”

I could see her pause to wonder why in hell she was telling me all this, but then she ploughed on ahead. I remembered the name, ‘B. Barrett,’ a couple of lines above Desme’s on the check-out card for the grimoire.

“After a few months together, we slipped into the notorious lesbian bed death, you know—not really hot together. I thought we could work through it, but then I found she’d been seeing someone else. I threw her out, fired her. She was, well, pissed off.”

“If there was something that, well, happened to you, is there any way she might benefit?”

Desme froze. “I don’t have... I willed the shop to her. I haven’t changed it yet. Ah, Goddess, she even mentioned the ‘Heart’s Ease’ oh-so-casually, last time we met—like she was trying to put the idea in my head. How did I not see that?”

I reached forward and put my hand on her arm. “It may not be how it looks, Desme. Please, just destroy any powder you made from the recipe and don’t do anything. I need to make sure nobody else is using it and tomorrow I’ll let the occult investigators know about the irregularity. They might want to come and have a word.”

“But B.B.—she was so angry. She said she’d put as much into the shop as me. What if she...?”

“Don’t worry. I’ll ask Ferris to stay here with you. He’s with us from the Seelie and he needs a good reason to stay away from Underhill overnight, anyway.”

I ventured a smile and she returned it.

\* \* \* \*

There was only one name on the list between B.B. and Desme, and my conscience urged me to check it out before morning. If B.B. had made the change, this other reader might end up as an unintended casualty of her spite. The investigators would probably be pissed at my presumption, but they didn’t exactly hand out a twenty-four hour contact number to passing librarians.

I was pleased to leave Ferris with his guard duty and he could hardly disagree. However, I could swear I saw him pout. On an elfin warrior in the guise of a male



supermodel, it was a rather endearing expression. I was still thinking about that when I missed the off-ramp, so it was about nine in the evening before I got to the right address, deep in the mazelike suburbs.

I was relieved to see the lights were on; meaning I wouldn't have to wake the house. But the situation could still be tricky. Many members of the occult community choose not to tell their partners or children the whole truth. I knew nothing about Sarah Patterson except that she had access to the archive and this was her address.

I rang the bell and peered through the frosted glass of the door. Nobody came. I pounded loudly on the wooden frame with no result.

With my neck prickling to the stare of an imaginary neighbourhood watch, I went around to the window. There was only a small gap in the curtain, and through it, I could see a strip of carpet...and a foot. The foot was obviously of a person, a woman, lying on the floor.

I've never been a man of action, but something told me there was really very little time to lose. I walked back to the front door, picking up a brick from the ornamental garden edging along the way. It was damned awkward to hold, but I got a good grip on one end and smashed it against the door. It took a good few bashes to get through the reinforced glass, which gave in small squares, not great shards. I stepped gingerly over the broken glass.

The décor was old-fashioned and demure. Beyond the hall, there was a densely furnished living room. The woman was dressed like an office worker in a blouse, skirt, and pumps. She lay on the rug between a broad coffee table and a gas fireplace fixed to the wall. Her fingers twitched, but it was the only sign of life other than her eyes fixed wide and staring towards the ceiling.

With sick certainty, I knew it was the "Janus." She was seeing things, and the horrible thing with opening the mind's doors is that they weren't just hallucinations. At one level or another, they were real. As I have already said, I was a theorist. I knew in theory what I had to do; I had to find an anchor for her, something that would bring her back to the small reality that we mortals are intended to inhabit. My whole body shook with the idea that the responsibility for this woman's life and sanity was falling upon my narrow shoulders.

I looked around the room, searching for clues. There was an opened letter and torn envelope on the table. A decree absolute—the woman had just been divorced. There were pictures on the walls and a few spots where pictures had recently been. Those that remained were school portraits and holidays snaps showing her and two children, both girls. The ages varied, but the latest shots seemed to show a toddler and a kid of about seven or eight.

I knelt at her side, grasping her by the shoulders. I felt her flinch at the touch, which meant she still must have some contact with this place.

“Sarah,” I said forcefully. “Sarah!”

The name is a connection in itself, but I got no more response except that her unfocussed eyes slid upwards a little. I had to phrase this just right to get her back in this house rather than lost out in some nether region of the greater aether.

“Sarah, where are the children? Where are your little girls?”

Her eyes slid from side to side, and then just for an instant, they focused on my face.

“Where are your little girls, Sarah?” I pressed. “Are they safe? Shall we go and find them?”

She blinked and her mouth made mute motions.

“Come on, Sarah.”

I wrenched her up on her feet and felt some effort from her to straighten her legs.

“Where are they, love? Upstairs?”

There was no mistaking it now; she was trying to come back. Her hand groped out, hitting the wall as if whatever she saw wasn’t this room. She stumbled, grasping my waist and grabbing the doorway. It was her that pulled us towards the stairs.

“That’s right, let’s go see them.”

About halfway up the stairs, she started to land her feet on them like she was beginning to see. She pulled away from me at the landing and opened the first door. I could just see a small bed and basinet side by side.

“Bessie, Jenny?” she whispered and I heard a sleepy voice reply.

Amazingly enough, it seems I finally did something right.

\* \* \* \*

I helped Sarah ring around a few friends that would understand and I waited for them to arrive. She was in a Wiccan coterie and they started turning up pretty quickly; she seemed to be in good hands. I extracted myself from their polite thanks and took myself home.

I was able to grab a few hours sleep just when I really wanted to be awake and had vivid dreams about being chased through the darkness by monsters I couldn’t see. The feelings of fear and oppression lingered after I woke, and so I got up in the morning slightly surprised to have just another ordinary day ahead of me.

It’s a choice, in the end, when you’re living with something like this curse. I decided to have a normal life after a fashion and I took a few risks to make that happen. My car was in a well-sealed garage and its UV-tinted windows got me to the underground car park. If I ever had cause to stop along the way, it would probably be over before I suffered much. My job didn’t put me in prolonged

contact with too many people, so the chances of exposing some unfortunate beloved to the curse were pretty small. Of course, I'd be seeing Ferris again today—that was a cause for joy and dread. I hoped he had more sense than to have a fetish for diminutive human librarians.

I knew that I would have a report to write when I got in, but instead of an empty chair, I found a rather trendy-looking middle-aged man waiting in my office. Not a customer; the doors hadn't opened yet. Ferris was there, too, and something told me that the air was a little cool between them. That had me momentarily worried. The man stood, showing just how tall and well turned-out he was, from his tussled sandy hair to his suede loafers. And to be honest, good grooming was just icing on the cake.

"Investigator Reg Barth," he said warmly. "Just thought I had better come in and debrief you over the events of the night."

"I, um, that is I hope..." I said with an abject lack of cool. My hand waggled limply as he shook it.

"We were very impressed with how you handled things," Reg stormed on effusively. "A rapid, highly competent response. You shut down a dangerous situation very efficiently. Really, there was nothing left for us to do, but if you could come in this afternoon, we can just put a few things on the record before we close the file."

"Yes, I mean naturally I was going to let the Occult Investigators know first thing..."

"Absolutely. Really, there is no problem. Marta from the Hyde Coterie dropped us a line, but there really was nothing for us to do but make a record of the incident. But for your swift actions, it could easily have been a tragedy. They expect Sarah will make a very good recovery, by the way, and she wanted us to pass on her thanks."

Reg was rather pouring it on, but who was I to complain? "Um, as to that appointment..."

"Taking into account your special requirements, the recorder and inquiring officer will come here. I have arranged for the use of the meeting room on the second floor. At two—if that would be convenient?"

"Of..."

"Great."

His habit of not letting me finish sentences, even when they only had two words, was rather aggravating, but he didn't give me time to dwell on it. He shook my hand vigorously, again. (This time I managed to assert at least a little pressure.) Then he was off, shouting over his shoulder, "Good job, really. We might have some interesting opportunities to discuss. I hope to be seeing a lot more of *you*."

He left Steve and Ferris alone in the dusty office.

“Special requirements?” Ferris asked.

*Oh hell.*

Somehow, it just seemed easier to tell him; that might at least close the door on the nastier possibilities of the other aspect of the curse.

“I’m a vampire.”

He looked at me a little blankly. Elves all but worship the sun so vampirism is anathema to them.

Not for the first time, Ferris surprised me. “You really are remarkable,” he said. “I would never have known.” He glanced over that the little yellow desk where the new intake of books still lay piled. “I was going to suggest we grab some lunch after this, but in the circumstances, I suppose that would be difficult.”

Something told me that he was about to suggest dinner instead.

“Well,” I said with a yawn. “I have plenty to get done and I’m hoping to work through so I can knock off early to catch up on my sleep.”

I sat down at my workstation and started the computer. I was doing a pretty good impression of not noticing that Ferris was still there. I started working on the acquisitions budget and that’s always quite the job. The list of desired acquisitions is always full of obscure and highly expensive texts, and the budget doesn’t even track inflation. My act had become true when I felt a hand on my shoulder.

“Perhaps some other time,” Ferris said.

He went over to inspect the books that he meant to check yesterday. I stared dumbly after him. He looked back and saw me watching. Boy, was I in trouble now.

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Instead of going home early, I actually hid in my basement office thanking the Gods we weren’t too busy; I couldn’t have faced a conversation with anyone. The inquiring officer had gone over every trivial detail of the night before. It brought me to earth with a thud. Despite what the rakish Reg might say, what I had done had only been entirely ordinary and not for the best of motivations either.

I crept out and peered at the gloriously early dusk. I got in the car and parked across the road from the Crystal Palace. My black mood had hatched a daft plan.

I waited and waited, thinking I might have to come back tomorrow. Finally, I saw Desme pop out. She is a serious coffee-aholic, so it was a fair bet she’d leave the shop some time during a late Friday opening. This was my cue. I slid out of the car, strode across the road, and into the shop. I simply walked straight into the back. I felt safe in assuming that the owner told the shop girl to ignore any goings on out back. Bless Desme’s orderly mind, I had noticed the alphabetisation of the hundreds of wooden drawers in the cabinets. “J” for “Janis.”

I took out a spoonful and wrapped it in a paper cone from the dispenser on the desk. I poked in a ten quid note and pushed it so that the dried leaves covered it over. I didn't want to steal from her, but I didn't want her to interfere, either. I headed back out with the blithe air of a man with a purpose. If I had to stop loving Ferris, then it wouldn't matter what he ever thought about me. I shut myself up in my basement apartment. It was just turning to full dark and I had that feeling I always got—an energized sensation that almost seemed to rise up through the soles of my feet and tingle along my spine. Maybe it was that sensation making my heart beat quickly as I made up the tincture with water from my plastic kettle.

I sat on my old easy chair facing the television with the warm mug between my hands. Every instinctive part of my nature screamed that this was simply the worst idea I had ever conceived—and with me that is quite a lot to say, for I am simply not a very instinctive creature. I tipped my head back and drank.

For about a minute, I sat still and felt a perfect fool. Nothing was happening. Was something supposed to happen? Had I done something wrong?

Then, in a sudden movement like a movie 3D effect, the walls just fell away. I sat on the brightly lit carpet with the brightly lit ceiling suspended above me. On all sides, instead of papered walls, utter blackness extended endlessly into a void.

I understood immediately. Damn B.B. for being a devious and thorough bitch. Not only had she tampered with the grimoire, just to be sure, she had substituted the Janis with Janus in Desme's drawers. It had never for a moment occurred to me that she would have two separate plans to the same end and would be so callous towards any unfortunate customer who requested that ingredient.

Something started to move in the darkness—don't ask me how I knew. It was absolutely black and the movement should have been invisible to the eye. But it was there...or they were. The foremost of them stalked towards me with casual sloth. It was my nightmare come to life and I dimly wondered how that could be in rebellion against the orderly progression of time.

I knew that I was going to die. I had attracted these creatures' attention and they meant to devour me. I sat quite still. What, after all, could I do? Very gradually, the crisp, square edges of the floor of my wall-less room began to fade. Glassy black eyes came to the edge of this dissolving reality, blinking. I heard a quiet, sibilant sound—like the driest of autumn leaves skittering over a rough concrete floor.

I experienced a moment of relief; the curse would end. But my life would end, too, and I wasn't ready for that. The blackness edged in towards me, lapping at my feet, but I had forgotten how I sat with my back closer to the wall behind me than the one before me. Darkness took me from behind. I leaned forward, somehow hoping to poke my head back into a seeing world. I crawled until my worn-out old carpet gave way to something glassy smooth, and reaching back, even that surface

was gone.

I was shuddering across my whole body. I had always thought that shaking with fright was a just some kind of saying or that it would be a subtle shiver. This panic juddered over my body so my teeth clacked together like a man about to die of cold. The end of my world certainly wasn't going to occur with a bang, but I could feel a whimper in my throat that I was too terrified even to let loose.

I felt a touch on my back, and screaming, tried to leap away, but I could not hear the sound I made. Something grabbed me again and held me. I fought just briefly and quickly found my attacker immensely stronger than me. I froze like some poor rabbit in the fox's jaw. There is no point in further struggle; it would only prolong the agony.

Very, very faintly, I heard a voice. Not even the word it spoke—really just a tiny dust ball of sound, but it was a sound I had rolled in my mouth so many times. It was my name.

\* \* \* \*

I was more or less lying on my side; in utter blackness with a perfectly smooth floor, it was surprisingly hard to tell. I groped outwards and realized that the body holding me down was human.

His voice sounded muffled, as if it was coming from behind a thick brick wall. I stared into the obfuscating darkness, but I saw nothing of the person, or of my own arms and body. The air swirled as the creatures leapt at me in a flurry of talons and the stink of rank fur and flesh. I tried to yell and get away. The man held me.

The creature sailed over me; its claws sliced my cheek and ear. I felt it; I felt the blood streaming down my face.

"Steve, I am here for you. Steve, I love you." The desperate voice was suddenly clear. Not a human after all, but that of an elf.

Vision streamed across my eyes like sight when a windscreen wiper battles a downpour. Ferris pressed me down with my back against the floor. His eyes were wide and his face distorted by some expression I couldn't read.

*You can't love me, Ferris. You'll die.*

I redoubled my effort to push him away and the darkness poured down again. Craning to look upward, I saw the creature fall into a crouch, turn, and come back towards me.

A hand grabbed my hair. Soft lips pressed against mine. The kiss drew me in: sweet, deep, and thorough. I felt Ferris's tongue flicker against the barrier of my teeth and my neglected instincts asserted themselves—I let him in.

My eyes were closed; I didn't remember closing them. Slight red light filtered

through them. Ferris's body pressed hard against mine. I put my hands around him, clutching at his back. But conscience reared its ugly head and I froze. I rejected it—the price of my return would be too high.

Black. Black. Please it the Gods, let it be swift. The creature is just where I last saw it, as if when I could not see it, it could not move.

Ferris got my attention again, very efficiently. He ripped open the fly of my jeans; I felt the button fly off them. He pulled down my pants and grasped me firmly by both thighs. His moist lips kissed my glans, and then covered it. The flat of his tongue was rough against the hood, sliding it back.

I challenge any man to choose an endless shadow full of monsters over that.

Taut lips pursed over my swelling shaft worked up and down, hard and merciless. I bent my knees, pressing back into a ground that was covered in my old yellow carpet in dire need of Hovering. His hands moved up to my buttocks, pushing me up towards him. It was exquisite to emerge from a place devoid of sensation into the best blowjob of my life.

My cock slid through his warm mouth and butted against his slender throat. I struggled not to thrust against him.

"Ferris," I said. "Oh, God." There were no polytheists in this particular foxhole, it seemed. "Jesus."

He put one hand on my balls, rubbing his thumb gently over them whilst his fingers rested beneath. I was in this world now. I reached for Ferris; what choice did I have? He was merciless. With slow strokes, he pulled tightly up along my cock, his tongue hard against its underside. My balls curled up and it felt like the better part of my life force expelled itself from my body.

\* \* \* \*

As I lay by his side on the dusty carpet with my trousers around my knees, Ferris pulled me close against him. The cut on my chest seemed to be real; I could feel the itch of the scab forming. Ferris leaned over and licked gently up the length of the cut. That may have been an elf thing; frankly, I didn't care either way.

Then he whispered, "How about you tell me just what the hell is going on."

And with my eyes closed and my arms around his lithe body, that is exactly what I did. I thought he might hate me for what I had done, but Ferris only laughed. He repeated the words of the curse back to me.

"'That the sun, in seeing you, will burn you; the *man* returning your love would be destroyed.' Oh, Steven, you fool," he said, "I am not a *man*."

## **About the Author**

### **Emily Veinglory**

Emily Veinglory is a writer of fantasy and erotic romance. She writes many types of romance, but is best known for her gay romance e-books with fantasy and paranormal themes. She is also involved in book reviewing, illustration, and stock photography. Emily is a New Zealander currently living in Indiana and working as a postdoctoral researcher in the area of animal behavior.

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