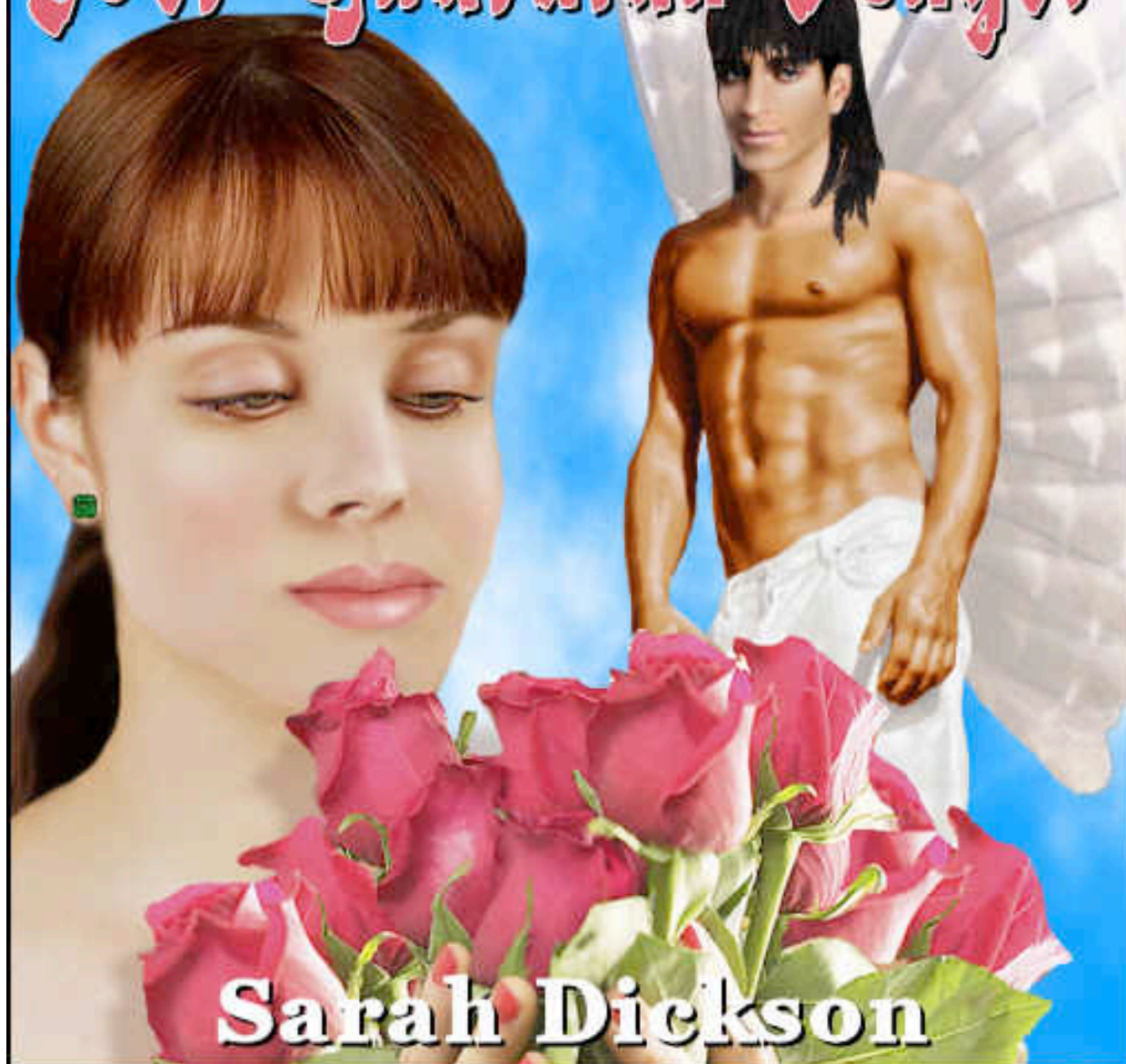


\* Lady Libell Press \*

# Her Guardian Angel



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a division of Chippewa Publishing, LLC

# **Her Guardian Angel**

by

Sarah Dickson

## **HER GUARDIAN ANGEL**

A Lady Aibell Press/Chippewa Publishing Publication, March 2006

Chippewa Publishing, LLC.  
PO Box 662  
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin 54729

Available Formats:  
Adobe Acrobat Reader (PDF)

Other available formats:  
Palm Doc (PDB), Rocket/REB1100 (RB), Pocket PC 1.0+ Compatible,  
Franklin eBookMan (FUB), hiebook (KML), iSilo (PDB), Mobipocket (PRC),  
OEBFF Format (IMP), Microsoft Reader (LIT), (HTML).

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Edited by Kristine Esterly  
Cover Art by Djinn  
Proofed by Brandy Overton

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**PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.**

## **Her Guardian Angel**

The young man looked worried. “Are you sure she’ll forgive me if I give her these roses?”

Most of her regulars considered her a counseling service, not a florist. Hope didn’t mind. Aside from sorting out what were silly misunderstandings at best, her clients usually left happy.

This man needed a little more persuasion. “Give her the roses, take her out to a nice restaurant, and promise you’ll not be late again.”

He removed his wallet from his coat pocket. “I can’t always guarantee I’ll be out of the office in time.”

“No one is saying you should, except the nights you promise to be on time, you should be.”

He handed her a twenty-pound note. “I’ll try.”

Hope removed change from the till. “Think of it this way. Is your job more important than her?”

Gripping the bundle of roses, he smiled wanly. At the door he turned. “You’re right. I need to get my priorities right. Thanks, Hope.”

The bell tinkled as the door closed.

Outside, the light began to fade. Not surprising considering autumn was around the corner.

After placing the display flowers in the refrigerator, she closed the doors of her florist shop, which was at the top end of High Street in Mavington, one of several villages around London. She liked it there, amongst the quaint, old-fashioned buildings. Some were two centuries old, giving a wonderful charm to the village suburb.

Her thoughts returned to the young man. Hope’s own love life wasn’t so problematic; no current lover thus no complications. Her friends, in particular Kathy, considered her a lost cause. Hope didn’t see it that way. She had freedom to do what she wanted, when she wanted, and if she decided to, with whom. An occasional casual fling sorted out her libido when it threatened to get out of

control. Fortunately, it didn't happen that often.

Life was good. Her apartment was five minutes away from the shop; tucked into a quiet street, so no traffic hassles. Living in the village had its advantages, such as tonight. If she wanted to go to the pub for a drink after work, she could and not worry about driving.

She ducked into the *Dog and Fox*, already full of customers. Kathy's red hair was impossible to miss amongst the throng around the bar. The warmth of the pub came as a welcome change to the chilly air outside. She removed her coat as Kathy made her way towards her.

"Hope. It's about time you showed up. Get a drink. We've got a table in the room above." She disappeared up the nearby stairs.

Bodies pressed in from all sides as Hope made her way to the bar. Familiar faces smiled at her. One of the men, Charles, was a regular customer to her shop.

"Beer or wine?"

"Merlot," she said.

"Done."

Smoke filled the air. His blue eyes searched hers; a sign he wanted to talk to her about a problem. "I've met a woman who I quite like, but she just wants sex."

That was a shift in his circumstances. Usually, it was him chasing the women then leaving them. Too late, she smiled.

"Oh, I know. It serves me right. I like her. Do you think some flowers might work?"

"What does she like?"

Charles shrugged. "I have no idea."

"Are you seeing her tonight?"

A hint of pink reached his cheeks. "Yes."

*He must like her.* "Ask her, and once you find out, come into the shop tomorrow."

His eyes narrowed. "And if she doesn't tell me?"

She nudged his arm. "We can guess. I have some lovely imported roses that never fail to impress a woman. We'll try a set of six."

He raised his pint of beer, saluting her. "Thanks, Hope. I'll see you then."

After a couple more sips, she quickly glanced at her watch. Kathy would be wondering where she was. "I have to go."

Hope lowered her gaze and made her way through the throng. One man refused to move aside, forcing her to look upwards. Dark eyes locked onto hers. When she managed to tear her gaze away, she got a good look at the rest of him. His dark hair hung loosely, reaching partway down his white shirt. His face was pale, giving his face almost an angelic appearance.

*Oh my goodness.*

Every part of her body reacted as if a jolt of electricity had raced through her. Heck, he hadn't even touched her yet.

Yet? Surely, she wasn't considering him.

Those dark eyes seemed to devour her whole.

He smiled, and the feeling they'd met before overtook her. If they had, no way would she have forgotten him. Perhaps it was wishful thinking, or most likely, he resembled a recent fantasy.

"Are you the florist?" His accent seemed foreign but she couldn't place it.

Nope. She'd definitely not met him before. She would remember the accent.

The noise around them intensified. He appeared to want to ask her another question so she motioned him to the base of the steps.

"I'd like to buy some flowers for a...friend."

"I'm closed."

What was she thinking when those words came out of her mouth? Tonight she could take him back to her shop and...

Moisture surged between her legs as she imagined the things she'd like to do to him.

*This is ridiculous. He's a complete stranger. I don't do sex with a stranger.*

He was a head taller than she was; now she noticed this detail. He leaned over to close the gap between them. He smelt of musk and another scent she couldn't define, but sent her senses reeling.

"There's no rush. I'll come tomorrow."

*Thank goodness for that.* In a steady voice she asked, "What type of flowers does your friend like?"

He licked his lower lip as if contemplating his answer.

Her nipples peaked, and she shoved her coat in front of her in case he noticed through her thin sweater.

*Stop it,* she ordered her libido.

"You may choose a dozen of your favorite blooms."

Could he be single? *No. No. Don't hope for that.* His devastating gaze seemed to burn straight into her soul.

*Think sensibly. He's a potential customer.* "Do you have a price limit?"

His breath touched her cheek, making her tremble. "Whatever price you think they are worth, I'll pay."

Her knees threatened to fail her. The glass in her hand began to tilt at a dangerous angle. His hand cupped hers, steadying the glass.

Clarity returned, and she remembered to breathe.

"Until tomorrow," he said, and walked gracefully out of the door.

"Who the hell was that?"

She spun around to meet Kathy. Amazed she could move again, she shook her

head. "I have no idea. He wants to buy some flowers. I said the shop was closed."

"Are you kidding? I'd have reopened the shop in a flash." She tisked. "No wonder you're developing cobwebs down there. You've forgotten how to get laid."

"I do get laid, just not that often."

"I know. When someone takes your fancy you become insatiable." Her voice lowered, "The way you looked at him, my dear, you were about to take him then and there."

Had she been so obvious?

She patted Hope's shoulder. "And he looked about to take you up on it."

No way. She could read men and he wasn't sending any signals to her, unless she'd been too lust addled to notice. "He's probably got a lover somewhere."

Kathy licked her lower lip. "I tell you what, I'll come in tomorrow, and if he's not between your thighs by tomorrow night, I want him."

*Was she kidding?* Since meeting *him*, Hope reassessed her situation. "I might not want to share."

"That's my girl. What time will I turn up tomorrow?"

"You really want to be my assistant?"

"It's my day off, and besides, it's all for a good cause."

"Nine A.M."

Kathy winked. "You're on."

\* \* \* \*

Centuries upon centuries had passed. He had lived on the emotions of others; fed on their dreams in order to survive. Dan never touched a mortal for real; it was far too dangerous. Except for one woman, a woman who died and was reborn again—his first and only true love who never remembered who he was.

*Hope.*

He'd been watching her since she was born. Hope had grown stronger in this incarnation, strong enough to give him the chance to return from exile, or so he hoped.

Not so in her past lives. Occasionally, when the need to touch a mortal became too great to ignore, he approached her, knowing Hope would not remember him nor be able to save him. The last time he'd returned and became her lover was a century ago. It was a folly in a way, since his agelessness had forced him to leave her ten years later. At least he never left her with child. One of the few "gifts" bestowed on him when he fell from grace.

If there were another way to return to grace—rather than exist as a creature of the night—he would have taken such a path. Unfortunately, he had fallen for earthly pleasures in the form of a woman—Hope in a past life—and she was the

only person who could aid him in his return.

Would she believe him? What did he have to look forward to if she didn't? Could he endure another wait until she was reborn, again?

*You doom yourself to a lifetime, her lifetime, if you err again. You must see her.*

He slipped back into a side street. He'd see her tomorrow, maybe, if he could find the courage.

Night passed slowly as it always did. He found a back room in the nearby church. No one ever entered at night and as temporary accommodation, it suited his needs. As one of the fallen, he had naught to fear from God or this sacred place.

The lock to the gate at the crypt provided no hindrance nor did the floor pose any discomfort.

Unable to stop himself, he left his body and drifted into her bedroom. She tossed and turned, no doubt fighting the desire from earlier in the evening.

Did he dare to taste her to determine if she possessed the strength he hoped for?

As the thought lingered, his mouth sought hers. Her lips parted, allowing him into the recesses of her mouth. Wine and a hint of curry reached his tongue. A low moan escaped his lips as his astral body rested beside her mortal one.

Sheets were no barrier to his long fingers, which he slid down her stomach. She quivered beneath his touch, gasped as his finger reached the forbidden place between her legs.

*Just a taste.*

Her soft moans filled his ears, urging him to explore further. Dipping into her wet passage, she whimpered. He kissed her deeply, moving his tongue in rhythm with his finger.

Hope arched back and cried out. Light poured from her, embracing him, holding his soul as a precious thing. He poured his despair into her, feared he might hurt her, but she took it all. Another low moan followed.

Exhilaration filled him as he released her. After so long in exile, he knew the reincarnation of the woman he loved would be able to save him this time.

Back in his body, he shuddered as he came. Intense and painful, he rode the orgasm. It had been worth it. He'd not erred in finding her ready and yearned for the time he would take her completely.

\* \* \* \*

Hope could barely slip the key into the lock the next morning. Kathy had to help her.

"He really got under your skin, didn't he?"



*You have no idea.*

Kathy pushed the door open. "Do you know I went out with the same man twice? I don't normally take on a regular lover but he's amazing in bed."

As was every man Kathy slept with.

No one had good sex that often, or if they did, Hope had certainly missed out. Last night certainly made up for lost ground, even if he was just a fantasy.

With an effort, Hope put aside the memory of those lips and wonderful hands on her body.

She removed flowers from the refrigerator in the back of the shop. "Kathy, can you put these outside, in the front?"

While Kathy placed the buckets outside, Hope arranged the remaining roses in a bucket on the counter. They were blood red, and her favorite.

Kathy gazed at the roses. "Are they for your mystery man?"

*Mystery man?* "He probably has a girlfriend somewhere."

"The way he looked at you last night, I bet he plans to buy flowers for you then take you somewhere nice and afterwards—"

"No more, Kathy."

She grinned, turned away, and rearranged another posy.

"The man I mentioned before. He wants more. I'm unsure."

Was it a coincidence it was the man she met at the bar last night? If so, Charles was a good catch. "What's wrong with a relationship?"

"You, the expert, are you?" she asked, barely hiding a sly grin.

Hope ignored the barb. "If you are bothered by him, it must mean you care a little."

"He's honest and I'm not used to it."

"Rather than worry, why not simply enjoy your time with him and see what happens?"

Kathy returned to arranging flowers that really didn't need rearranging.

Hope shrugged. It was up to Kathy to determine any possibility of future happiness, not her.

Customers came and went but there was no sign of him.

"I bet he doesn't even show up," Hope muttered, surprised she felt so dejected.

Kathy took her hand. "Perhaps he was too good to be true after all."

The bell tinkled and both women looked around. Charles had arrived. His eyes widened with joy at seeing Kathy. "Hi."

Kathy appeared quite as surprised as he did.

"I didn't know you worked here."

By their body language, it confirmed that Kathy was whom he talked about.

"Only for today. I was helping Hope out." She grabbed her bag. She gave a coy glance. "You're coming to the pub tonight?"

Charles smiled with relief. "Sure. I'll walk you there."

In a way, she was glad Kathy had gone. Perhaps Mr. Mystery had wanted to wait until she was alone. Hope peered outside. People scurried past as the light outside began to fade.

*May as well close up.*

The bell tinkled. She spun around, nearly dropping the roses she held.

It was *him*.

He caught a stalk that slipped from her hands. "Sorry I'm late."

Fire surged where he touched her. Why did he affect her so much?

"Would you like a drink?"

She could not take her gaze from his. "Didn't you want flowers?"

"Not really. I wanted to see you."

*Kathy had been right after all.* "A drink would be nice."

"How about the pub?" He grabbed the roses. "Here, I'll help you." He placed them back in the bucket.

She locked up the shop and they walked to the pub.

Inside, he asked, "What do you want to drink?"

"Merlot."

Hope watched as he wove through the crowds. A couple of women gave him more than a passing glance. One spoke to him. Hope couldn't catch the words, but by the way he shook his head, she could guess. Poor man must be used to women hounding him.

He returned with two wineglasses. "I've never introduced myself. I'm Dan."

"Hope."

"Let's get a table upstairs."

She looked around and saw a couple of familiar faces. She smiled politely and then followed Dan to a table.

Cradling her glass, she glanced at him. Oh, he was gorgeous, unbelievably so, almost angelic.

*Angels.*

The glass slid from her fingers. Lightning fast, he caught it before wine spilled on the table.

Just as he had whisked her out of harm's way all those years ago.

She shook her head. *No way could it be him. He hasn't aged, and people age, right?*

It's time to ask him; hopefully, he would deny it and she could blame her imagination after all. "Have we met before?"

"Yes," he said softly.

Her heart skidded in cartwheels.

She *had* seen him before. The mystery man who'd snatched her from her

bicycle after she had fallen off it in the middle of the road. The red car had been almost on top of her when strong hands had pulled her out of the way.

*Was it really him?* “I was ten at the time. How can it be you?”

He smiled, sending her body to jelly. The smile fled. “It was me.”

The seriousness in his gaze stalled her next question. *Are you kidding me?* He was totally serious.

“How is that possible? You haven’t aged,” she said the last a little too loud.

Hope looked around. Other patrons nearby appeared too engrossed in their own conversations to care about her outburst.

Dan leaned forward. His hands slid into hers. The noise of the room abated. The memory returned.

He had scooped her up in his arms and taken her to the side of the road. She had looked up into eyes as dark as the night. “Who *are* you?”

“Your very own guardian angel, who will watch over you forever,” he had said.

Dan released her hands and the room of the pub returned. The chattering seemed louder.

“I have been watching you for a long time.”

She recalled other times when she had imagined someone following her, turned around, and had seen no one there. She’d not felt afraid either, more a feeling of being safe. “You watched over me for all those years?”

“Yes.”

Hope wasn’t sure to be touched or annoyed. If it hadn’t been for the time he’d rescued her so many years ago she would not have believed him. But here he was, living proof.

“My name, Dan, comes from *damnum*, which is Latin for loss or damage, or so my maker told me.”

*Angels spoke of makers.* She took in a deep breath. “Did you say maker?”

His eyes shone like two flames of pure light that quickly faded again. “I did.”

Hope toyed with the rim of her glass of wine, stilling her shaking hands. “Why are you watching over me?”

He leaned closer. What felt like a million energy currents raced over her. If she opened her heart to him, she feared he would devour her. She backed away hoping physical separation would ease the burning heat that began to ignite deep inside.

It didn’t work.

“We should go,” Dan said.

Shaking from the strength of her reaction to him, Hope didn’t want to leave with him. She grabbed the glass and sipped more wine to steady her nerves.

His pleading gaze shook her to the core. “I need hope, and you are mine.”

*Don’t freak out now, Hope. Go with this.* “I don’t understand.”

“Not here, please.”

She rose. To find answers she would have to do as he asked.

Outside, the cold air bit into her. Cars drove past at a hurried pace.

Dan cupped her elbow. “We’ll go to your place.” He drew her close, nuzzled his lips against her neck sending tiny rivulets of fire over her body.

“You always liked being kissed there.”

She looked up at him. *How could he possibly know?*

“I’ll explain in a moment. Please, will you bear with me?”

She nodded.

“I am one of the fallen who loved a mortal woman. As a result of choosing earthly pleasures, I was punished by experiencing no other.”

She had heard of fallen angels, men who chose to live amongst mortal women. As a result, this was their prison for eternity. Hope believed such stories to be fiction.

“What does this have to do with me?”

He cupped her chin. “Let me show you.” He brushed a strand of dark hair from her face then proceeded to her throat. A familiar yearning returned as did a memory of how she enjoyed his touch.

*His touch? Yes. I’m beginning to remember.*

“You always liked to be touched there before we made love.”

He leaned forward, cupped her chin, and kissed her. Fire surged through her body, making her breathless. His tongue leisurely explored her mouth while his hands rested on her waist, steadying her. Just as well, or she’d have fallen backwards onto the pavement. Other parts of her body ignited from her lips down her spine to her core. Conscious thought fizzed into a sea of sensation, of times of pleasure and parting.

White and gold filled her vision, of who he was and could be again. She had never seen anything like it yet knew it to be Dan in his pure form. Through the ages she had loved him, died, and forgotten; only to have his kiss reawaken her in another life.

He released her. Reeling from the memories, she sagged into him.

The street slowly ceased to spin.

Panting, she looked at him, confused. “How can this be possible?”

“A tiny part of you remained forever linked with me, returning with each of your lifetimes.”

“How come I don’t remember?”

“Mortals reborn don’t recall their previous lives. I always found you, but so many of those times I dared not approach you.”

As much as her rational mind tried to deny what he told her, her intuition knew he spoke and showed the truth. “We’ve met again and again?”

“Yes. I have sought you out, hoped you would have the strength to help me to return to grace.”

She began to shiver in the cold air. The unease with taking him back to her apartment had gone. “Let’s go.”

Inside her two-room apartment, she indicated the main room. “Take a seat.”

He took her hand, eased her to sit beside him on the sofa. “You have another question, ask it.”

“Did you try in a previous life?”

“I did but you weren’t strong enough then.”

The way he spoke of her in the past sent a chill over her spine. “What are you saying?”

“When I came to you last night, I knew you would be strong enough.” He cast an image of them entwined.

The light mingled with the amazing orgasm. “It was you!”

“Yes. Forgive me.”

His admittance rendered Hope speechless.

“Sometimes, I stayed with you until people questioned my age, and then I had to leave you. Other times, I fed on the emotions of others; captured their despair, lust, hope, or whatever lay in their dreams. They gave me the sustenance I needed to survive.”

“Like a vampire?”

“In a way, yes.”

It sounded terrible, the need to feed on dreams. “For how many years?”

“Centuries. So many centuries I have waited for you, or should I say, this incarnation of you.”

“How sure are you that I am ready?”

“You have seen that you are.” His gaze fell onto her lips then back to her eyes.

Did he really think she would succeed? She had seen flashes, fragments of their lives, but only fragments. How did he know this time she’d be able to save him? In fact, what would happen to him if she did succeed?

A gentle caress swept her mind. “I will return home.”

She pulled her coat around her tighter, hiding the need to be kissed. *No way am I going to do anything yet.*

“Does that mean you won’t exist in this realm?”

“I will disappear.”

“You mean at orgasm?”

“Yes.”

“If I am going to consider this, I want to know exactly what happens.” *What the hell did I say that for?*

“I’ll be in my plane of existence, but in yours no more.” A finger trailed her

cheek, sending rivulets of fire in its wake, “and you will forget all about me until your deathbed. We will join completely when you die.”

“So I won’t remember this...at all?”

“How could I force you to spend your life hoping for your death? You will live and love as a mortal should.”

She didn’t want to forget, but he was right. She would be miserable otherwise.

His touch became more familiar to her. While he was there, she needed to know more about him and his kind. “Are there others like you?”

“Many, who had fed on the dreams of others as I had, still hope. Some have returned to grace.”

While others wandered the Earth until their loved ones became strong enough to save them. “How sad.”

He tilted her chin so her gaze met his. “Not for you or me. Let me love you one last time.”

She wasn’t scared, not anymore.

With slow deliberation, he slipped off her sweater. His head bent low, he suckled a nipple through her bra. Electricity sizzled to her core, causing her to cum almost immediately.

He would be gone...afterwards.

*Don’t think of later, think of what you are offering him now.*

He released her. “You taste divine and I haven’t started yet.”

Moisture surged between her legs as she imagined what he had left to do. She unzipped his pants, slid her hand in, and gasped at his erection.

*Oh, nice.*

He removed his pants then his shirt. With underwear their only barricade, Hope began to remove her bra.

Dan watched, riveted, as the bra straps fell down her arms. “Just as I remember you.”

Her nipples were so erect she could not believe how aroused she was.

He cupped her breasts. *What lovely long and slender fingers.*

Those wonderful hands slid from her breasts to her waist. One moved to her butt, the other to between her legs dipping a finger into her moist centre.

His gaze never left her eyes. “I want to taste you.”

Her knees almost failed her at the pleasure of what his finger was doing to her.

With little coherence remaining, she whispered, “And I you.”

Dan gripped the elastic on her underpants and kneeling, slipped them off. She lifted a foot, freeing herself of the last of her clothing. He caught her leg and she widened her step to give him access. She gripped his dark hair as she braced herself for his tongue.

After one flick over her clitoris, he plunged his tongue between her folds,

sending a bolt of heat from her core to her throat. She cried out.

Hope shuddered as he plunged deeper with his tongue. He nipped her clit then resumed pulling the juices between her folds. Fragments of other times in her past lives swum around in a sea of pleasure. He had pleased her many times.

She whimpered, wanting this life to be like one of those other times, even if it were for a few years. She gripped his hair. "Why can't you stay?"

He looked up at her, sadness in his eyes. "This is but transient pleasure. When we meet again, you will experience bliss beyond comparison." He rose, and his lips met hers again. She could taste herself on his tongue. Fingers slid inside her passage, brushed her sensitive spot, sending her body rigid as the first orgasm rocked her. Fanatically searching for his cock, she found it. Gripping his shaft, she squeezed. *Oh yes, please be inside me soon, very soon.*

As if he heard her, he stopped. If he didn't stop, she would cum again.

His pupils had narrowed to pinpricks. "Taste me as you used to."

She removed his shorts. His cock was wonderfully thick and long. *Oh my, oh my.* She wanted to taste him, now. Kneeling, she drew the head of his cock between her lips and suckled. His hands caressed her head, aiding her mouth onto him more deeply.

"Hope, my hope, I will love you forever."

*Love.* No one had loved her as he had, or would. She ran her tongue over his shaft and withdrew. Licking the slit of the tip, she closed her eyes as she took him in fully again.

His breathing quickened. A soft moan came from his lips.

She cupped his balls feeling them harden as her mouth worked over his delicious shaft. He wasn't too far away from coming.

"No more," he whispered.

A pang of sadness filled her as she stood. This would be the last time she would ever taste him.

He brushed a tear from her cheek. "Don't be sad for me."

Gently he eased her onto the floor, widened her legs, and with no hesitation at all, slid in.

Widening her legs further, she savored him filling her. He felt so good inside. She cupped his chin, but he forestalled her. Sadness and hope filled his gaze. "I want to watch you, for yours will be the last face I'll ever see."

Such finality in his words sent another tear down her cheek. He wiped it away.

He slid out slowly and in again, not so slowly, his eyes never wavering. Hope felt every part of him, his gentle hands on her breasts, his smile as he came inside her again, savoring her pleasure as much as she was his.

The build came, deep and fierce. Pain filled his eyes as she sensed the despair pour out from him into her. She took it all, caressed it, and sent it on its way.

The room began to fade as the build deepened. She found herself elsewhere, in a place that held no form. Dan was there, just as a presence, but still very real. She felt his need burn into her and hers began to take over. White fire laced with gold flickered over their bodies. Another wave of darkness no more than wisps of fog swept over them. All of him loving her, again and again over the centuries.

*And one day you will return to him, forever.*

Joy filled her. Her time on this world would be brief by comparison. Such a sense of finality brought an edge to the orgasm building inside her and him; a release in more ways than one. Her own orgasm blinded her, crashing over her body. A moan in the distance could have been hers but she truly didn't know.

A sense of pure joy swept her as he poured into her. His whispers in her mind spoke of reunion, not sadness.

A brief flash of light came and went. When her vision cleared, she was alone.

Dazed, she propped herself on her elbows. His clothes were all that remained of any proof he existed at all.

A sense of incredible contentment lingered. Was it him or the afterglow?

*Both.* He lingered no more than a caress on her skin. *I must go, but I will return when you are ready to join me.*

Then he faded.

She remembered the first time they'd met. An oasis surrounded by palm trees. She was a daughter of a great king who fell in love with a wanderer who had come to her with no more a reason than to observe humanity. Instead of passing through he had stayed with her, loved her. As a result, he was condemned to remain forever a wanderer.

The memory faded. Hope whimpered. She didn't want to forget. Desperately she clung to the last fragment which faded with the last of the light outside.

She fell into a dreamless sleep.

\* \* \* \*

Dan had not faded for good, only invisible to the mortal eye. He had a few scant minutes to remove everything from her apartment before he did fade completely from this realm. He didn't want to leave anything behind as a reminder.

So serene she looked, he wished he could have stayed but couldn't. A few decades were nothing when centuries would soon follow.

He lifted her in his arms and carried her to the bed. After dragging the blankets over her body, he planted a farewell kiss on her forehead.

Dan grabbed his clothes. Darkness covered his departure from her apartment and her life. He went to the nearest bin and tossed the clothes in.

He floated back to her window and peered in one last time. He smiled as white



light filled his vision. He was returning home.

\* \* \* \*

A banging sound invaded her thoughts. *What am I doing here in bed?* She must have been tired and needed sleep—not unusual for her.

Another knock came, more insistent. She picked up her clothes on the floor beside the bed and dressed quickly.

Peering through the eyepiece, she spotted Kathy, who appeared overjoyed. Hope opened the door.

“Oh my goodness, you look positively radiant.” She gave the closed bedroom door a sideways glance. “Is he...”

“Who?”

“Are you kidding? The gorgeous man who came to the pub last night.”

Hope recalled meeting a man in the pub who wanted to buy flowers. She recalled him as cute but nothing more. “He didn’t come to the shop.”

“What a pity, I really thought he was stuck on you. Oh well. I got it wrong.”

Just her luck he went elsewhere or changed his mind. She shrugged. “No matter. I’m sure I’ll find another man eventually. You want some wine?”

“I’ll get it.”

Kathy paused midway to the kitchen. “By the way, Charles asked me to go away with him on the weekend. He’s nice, really nice.”

“I’m glad for you.”

“I wish you’d meet a nice man.”

Hope shrugged as she always did when this topic came up. “I’m happy as I am.”

“I’ll be back in a minute,” Kathy said.

Hope wandered to the window and glanced outside. The sense of someone watching her no longer lingered. A lump formed in her throat, and she didn’t know why. She turned around and spotted a crushed rose petal on the floor. She picked it up. *Where had that come from?*

She placed it on the window ledge. *Must have dropped a petal and brought it home by accident.*

“Here you go.”

Hope took the wine from Kathy. “To Charles.”

“And to any man you might meet.”

“I’m happy as I am, truly.”

“I bet one day you’ll change your mind.”

Hope suspected Kathy was right, but not for a long time yet, if she could help it. Things were good, just the way they were.

## **About the Author**

### **Sarah Dickson**

Sarah Dickson lives in Queensland, Australia with her husband and two dogs.

She took up fiction writing five years ago when an opportunity arose to work part-time. Her passion is writing both erotic and non-erotic fiction that readers will enjoy, preferably a paranormal or set on another world.

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