



Grimoire Erato
By Julia Talbot

Kelly Jacobs didn't believe in magic. Staring at all of the trappings of his great uncle's magic shop just made that idea stronger. Did people really think that crystal balls and copper bracelets did them any good?

Uncle Noel sure had. Kelly could remember long hours spent in the shop as a child, watching his uncle grind herbs and extol the virtues this tea or that gemstone. The creaky wood floors and crumbling scrolls had fascinated him, even as they disgusted him now.

The smell of sage sat unhappily in his nose, and Kelly was pretty sure that was what made his eyes water a little.

Sighing, he turned in a circle, trying to decide what to do. Maybe a liquidation sale, then sell the property. Or he could make some money on renting the old shop out, he supposed. He just didn't think he could sell the shop intact to anyone. Who wanted to run a New Age shop in the very pragmatic, tiny community of Loyal, Colorado?

Well, except his now dead uncle.

He'd miss the old man, that was for sure. Damn it all.

Shaking his head, Kelly moved around the shop, locking cases and turning out lights. He'd come back tomorrow and look at the accounts, check the inventory sheets. Then he could make a more informed decision.

Just as he was about to leave the shop, though, an old book caught his eye. It sat in solitary splendor in a display case, a tiny brass sign tastefully proclaiming, "For Display Only."

Huh.

Well, seeing as how he couldn't make the drive back to Denver until he'd settled Uncle Noel's estate, he'd need something to keep him occupied in the drafty old ranch house at night.

He'd been a Medievalist until he'd changed majors his junior year, deciding business was far more practical. The book looked to be right up his alley for a little light reading. Grimoire Erato. Smiling, Kelly searched his keys for the little one that opened all the display cases. An erotic spell book would be just the thing for a man whose last relation had just passed, and who had been dumped a week before that, huh?

At least it would give him a damned good laugh.

The book was big, maybe fifteen inches along the spine, bound in buttery, soft leather, with pages of heavy vellum. The heft of it surprised him, and the tingle that went up his arms when he touched it made Kelly glance behind him, just to make sure he was alone.

No one there. Snorting, Kelly stuffed the book in his laptop bag. That whole hair standing up thing was ridiculous.

He didn't believe in magic.

The night had the kind of chill to it that only mountain Colorado fall could achieve. The kind that made your feet and nose cold, but wasn't cold enough for heavy blankets and log fires just yet.

Oh, he could smell wood smoke, as some of Noel's neighbors still cooked that way, but Noel's place was snug as a bug in a rug. Sipping a brandy, Kelly curled up in the big chair before the empty hearth and grabbed his book. If he kept the little ranch house, he figured he'd put in a TV and satellite.

For now, he'd have to crack the book he'd brought home to put himself to sleep instead of watching a dull movie. His laptop screen just wasn't big enough to keep his eyes from getting tired.

The book smelled like pine and sage, which shouldn't surprise him, the way his uncle had spread the herbs about. Kelly had expected it to smell kinda... musty. The more natural tang of spice was a pleasant surprise.

"Well, old man," he said out loud, just to hear someone talk. "Let's see what was so all-fired special about this one that you didn't share it."

The letters swam a little at first. He liked his languages dead, he would admit, but it had been a long while since he'd read Latin. Hell, this was worse. It was a combination of Latin and archaic Greek.

"Every well-educated young man should read French, Latin and Greek," Uncle Noel had told him not long after Kelly's mom and dad had died in a freak snowstorm. They'd been cross-country skiing.

His eight year-old self had scoffed. "Does that mean I get a grand tour of Europe when I'm old enough, too?"

Noel's blue eyes had danced. "If you behave."

Kelly had soon learned that Noel always kept his promises, and he'd been sent off on a backpacking tour of Europe when he turned eighteen. Noel had given him a Eurailpass and enough money to last two months if he was frugal.

It had been the time of his life.

Sighing, rubbing his eyes, Kelly focused back on the book, reading some of it out loud, just for the fun of it. "A lonely man should sacrifice a cock, if what he desires leads him to this path, and should offer the flesh to the one bound to serve, to receive his earthly reward. He should read from the book at the longest hour, and light the fire that will bring him the thing he needs above all else."

Right. Lord, what a crock of shit.

Kelly closed the book and finished off his brandy, just as the old grandfather clock struck midnight thirty. Well, there was the longest hour, huh? Cackling, Kelly climbed to his feet to refill his brandy, and the fire laid out in the fireplace caught his eye. Oh, hell, why not? He lit the kindling, watching it spring to life like it never did when he actually needed a fire.

He didn't have a cock to sacrifice, but maybe he'd jack off when he went to bed. Just to see what the old book had up its leather jacket.

Which was probably not a damned thing.

Groaning, Kelly rubbed his eyes and rolled over, his head pounding a little from all the brandy he'd sucked down.

He hit something warm and hard on the second roll, stopping him where he lay, and he heard something that sounded like a grunt. A distinctly male grunt.

Cracking one eye open, he stared. Then Kelly started back like his ass was on fire, scrambling out of the bed.

"Who the hell are you and how did you get into my house?"

The guy (because it wasn't a hallucination like he was hoping it was) blinked, then smiled, showing off a fine set of white teeth. "This is Noel's house."

"Not anymore. Noel died. That still doesn't tell me..."

Kelly trailed off, because the guy looked absolutely crushed, his deep, blue-green eyes going from twinkling to tear-filled in an instant. "Noel... He is gone to the land of the dead? Oh. My poor Noel. So long since he called me last..." Now those eyes hardened. "Who are you?"

"You've got some nerve..." He was fully prepared to bluster, but suddenly Kelly had the tingling feeling he'd had the first time he touched the book, and his mouth opened without him even thinking it could. "Noel's great nephew."

"Ah, so you are family. Well, that is all right, then."

"All right... Bullshit! I don't know you!"

He'd remember meeting someone with iridescent black-blue-purple hair and a... a tail? Yeah. Kelly was pretty sure he'd remember that. He didn't.

"You will." The man-thing smiled again, moving to the edge of the bed, legs sprawled. His skin was, uh, very blue. Like light, sparkly blue. Dude.

"I will? I don't think so. I'm going to call the cops." Kelly headed for his cell phone, searching for his robe to cover up with, feeling very exposed.

"Do you really want to have to explain why I am not here?"

Turning, Kelly pointed a finger at... Nothing. There was no one on the bed, no one in the corners of the room. Nothing.

"What the fuck!" He was losing his mind.

"Fucking I like." The air stirred only feet in front of him, the blue guy appearing right there, close enough to touch. Which the tail did. Touch him, sliding right up along his leg.

Springing back, Kelly glared. "Don't do that."

Fuck. If the asshole could go invisible, calling the cops would be pointless. Wait. No one could go invisible, or teleport or whatever.

"My name is Emmanuel, not asshole, and I cannot teleport. I simply become transparent when I need to."

"Trans..." Okay. Okay, he needed to find the book. It was in the front room. It had to be. That was the only answer. What the hell had Uncle Noel done with. No. Okay, ew.

"The book will not help you until you've taken what you desire, Kelly. That is part of the spell you read when you summoned me. I can, however, appear however you want me."

"How do you know my name? You didn't know who I was before."

Nodding, smiling with those amazing teeth, Emmanuel moved close again, tail sliding up the back of his thigh under his robe. "I did not know you were Noel's family. Once I did, I was able to establish a connection."

Kelly gaped, knowing he was just losing it. Crazy went with BF Nowhere Colorado like beans went with rice. That had to be it. He had some sort of cabin fever.

"A connection. Get your tail off me. What are you, some kind of incubus?"

"Do you feel weak?"

He tilted his head and thought about that. "No."

"Well, I slept with you. Were I an incubus, you'd feel horrible."

"Huh." He couldn't argue with that. He'd read enough Medieval medicinal works to know what the effects of an incubus could be. Even if he didn't believe in magic.

"Okay, so if we have this connection, what is it I desire so much?"

"You're lonely. You want companionship and sex." So bald, said like that, those weird blue-green eyes holding his. That freaky tail tickled his balls. "Let me help."

"No!" It came out violently, a strong and absolute negative. "You don't exist."

That was it. He just had to believe the... thing. The thing out of existence.

Emmanuel slumped a little, looking almost as sad as he had only moments before, when Kelly had told him about Uncle Noel. "Sadly, I do, at least for now," Emmanuel said. "You're just going to have to get used to me if you won't use me."

Kelly groaned, resolutely turning his back. "I'm not now, nor have I ever been, lonely enough for that."

Emmanuel was impossible to ignore.

Naked and blue, hung like a bull moose, all tail-having and pretty... He was everywhere.

When Kelly went to the shop, Emmanuel was there, spread out over the big jewelry case, jerking off like the fiend he surely was.

When he went to the grocery store, there was Emmanuel, doing obscene things with fruit and vegetables.

When he went to the gas station, Emmanuel was in the back seat of his car, humping his own tail.

No one else seemed to see the apparition with the giant hard-on, so it was either really magic, or Kelly really had lost his tiny mind.

One way or the other, it was getting hard for Kelly to do anything, because he was seeing these amazingly sexual things and sprouting wood at every turn.

What the fuck.

The shop was a zoo, because it was two days before Halloween, and people kept knocking on the door, wanting to know if he was going to keep Noel's business going,

and if they could buy stuff. They wanted everything from smudge sticks to jack-o-lantern kits, and Kelly wanted to scream by the time he got back to Uncle Noel's house with his rotisserie chicken and potato salad.

"You look like you've had a tough day," Emmanuel said, appearing behind him and rubbing his shoulders, making him start violently.

"Only because you've been following me like a stray dog! Would you stop it?"

"No. You need me, just as Noel did. I know it, after watching you. I can help."

"You can't help me!" he shouted, his hands flapping in the air.

"Of course I can. You summoned me."

"And I'll figure out how to send you back!" He was going to eat his supper, have the brownie he'd bought for dessert, and go to bed. Alone.

Kelly woke up in the middle of the night, warm and tingly, his cock hard and aching. Oh, God, he hadn't felt so good since he and Tim had first met. His skin felt tight and hot, his nipples as hard as they'd ever been, and he reached for his prick, not wanting to waste a hard-on this good.

His hand slid down, his thumb and forefinger meeting around the base of his cock. They met something else, too. Another hand.

"Shit!" Kelly tried to roll away, but he couldn't, not with the heavy arm around his waist holding him down. "Let go!"

"No. You do not wish for me to let go, not really." The hand that had beat his to its target tightened, making his toes curl, even as the tail wrapped around his leg squeezed.

"Oh, God." It felt so good, and in the dark of the night before Halloween, when all things seemed possible, he didn't have the strength to say no again. "I... Please. You can't be real."

"I can be whatever you want me to be," Emmanuel whispered, licking at the corner of his mouth. "Let me help you."

Kelly laid there and let that hand work him, let the thumb rub over his slit and make him cry out. His body knew what it wanted, even if his mind insisted that blue demons with tails and beautiful eyes were just a figment. His balls drew up, his ass clenching tight, and before he could even draw his next breath he was coming, his whole body bucking with incredible pleasure.

"Jesus fuck."

"Yes. You needed that so badly, love. So lonely."

"You keep saying that, but you don't know me at all."

"I do." Hot breath fell on his cheek, on his ear. "I know that your lover left you. I know that your uncle was your only family. I know that it has been so long since you felt your life was good. Stay here and run Noel's shop. You'll find a whole new life."

"What are you, my conscience or something? My inner thoughts? Who knew they could give me a hand... Ow!"

The tip of Emmanuel's tail backed away from the head of his cock, the slap still stinging like mad. "Do not mock me, love. I am right here."

"Sorry." Okay, so he was apologizing to a... a what, now?

"Yes, well. If you truly wish to send me back, tomorrow night is your best bet."

"Halloween, huh?"

"Yes. I will show you the spell."

"Why are you being so accommodating all of a sudden?"

Turning so he could look right into those glinting eyes, ones that pretty much glowed in the dark, Emmanuel sighed. "I miss Noel. You are not him. He believed; he gave me purpose. You cannot even accept pleasure freely given."

Fading until even the tail wrapped around his leg disappeared, Emmanuel's warm weight disappeared, only a whisper left on the air. "Have the book and the fire at midnight, Kelly. I will go if you will it."

Then he was alone, and for the first time since Emmanuel had appeared and started bugging the shit out of him, Kelly felt the worse for it.

And guilty as hell, to boot.

Midnight came before Kelly was ready. He had the book. He had a fire laid. Hell, he even had a bottle of brandy, just in case it really was the booze that had made him see Emmanuel. His tail-having dude had been noticeably absent for the past day, and Kelly had found himself looking, his whole body cold and heavy.

He looked at the clock again. Fifteen minutes. "If you're gonna do this, you'd best show up," he said out loud, looking for a tell-tale shimmer in the air.

"I am here." Appearing in Noel's chair, Emmanuel lounged, hair flowing down over his arm, tail flicking back and forth. "The spell is at the end of the book, third page from the back. You need only read it aloud and light the fire."

"You know, I never sacrificed a cock." That had been in the original spell, right?

"Ah, well, you did go to bed and..." The motion of Emmanuel's hand was unmistakable.

"Oh." His cheeks heated. "I'm, uh, sorry I dragged you all this way for nothing."

"So am I. Noel was good to me. Can I ask... That is, if you decide to sell the book..."

"Oh. Oh, well, I doubt I will. If it meant that much to Noel."

"Thank you." Smiling now, Emmanuel stood, prowling over, looking like nothing so much as a big cat. "We have a few minutes before midnight. Let me show you how good it could be if I stayed."

"I don't think... Oh."

Emmanuel slid to his knees, nuzzling against Kelly's crotch, leaving him a little speechless. A soft chuckle sounded when those hands undid his jeans, opening them so Emmanuel's mouth could take him in.

"Jesus." Kelly went up on tiptoes, his hips rocking, the feeling one he'd always loved, had missed for so long. "Please."

A wet, popping sound came when Emmanuel pulled off. "I won't leave you wanting, Kelly."

Then that mouth was back on him, those hands pushing at his clothes until he was nude, and Kelly found himself on the floor, his body covered by that sweet, hot skin, that amazing tail stroking him in the most intimate places. Moaning, he pushed into Emmanuel's mouth over and over again, finally realizing that the one thing he'd never done was to touch back.

Grabbing Emmanuel's tail, Kelly turned that muscled body so that the big prick pushed against his cheek, and he hummed, deciding he could give as good as he got.

Emmanuel moaned and pushed into his mouth when he opened up, sliding along his tongue, and the taste hot and salty and very, very masculine. Somehow he'd expected Emmanuel to taste... blue.

They rocked together, both of them sucking hard, and Kelly thought he might just burst with the pleasure of it. It felt so damned *good*.

Emmanuel's tongue rubbed hard at the base of his cock, those lips sealing right around him, and Kelly moaned around the hard flesh in his mouth, unable to stop moving, pushing, needing.

When he came it was an explosion, his whole body shaking, his moaned stifled only the tiniest bit by Emmanuel pouring down his throat in strong pulses, giving him everything.

The clock chimed the first stroke of midnight as they lay there, stroking each other's skin, breathing hard.

"You have an hour to perform the spell, Kelly," Emmanuel finally said. "If you want to send me back."

He thought for a moment, trying to get his brain to work. "What happens if I don't?"

"Well, there will be other chances, of course. I will stay until you send me away. Until you have no need of me."

"Would you rather go back now?"

That tail pushed between his legs, tickling him a little. "I want whatever makes you happy, Kelly. That is why I exist."

"That's not fair to you." He sat up, running his hand through his hair. "How is it supposed to make me happy, if you're with me because you have no choice?"

"You have to believe in magic, Kelly." Now Emmanuel just looked sad, his shoulders slumping, his tail dragging the floor. "If you do not, it can never be."

"I believe you're magic. I do. That's not enough for me to make you stay when you can't tell me you really want to. I need the book."

Damn it, he had to choose now to be noble, now, when he wanted Emmanuel to stay? Lord.

The book fell into his hands, opening to the third page from the back. "Will you at least think about keeping the shop?" Emmanuel asked. "It will bring you the joy you seek, just as it did Noel."

"I... I'll think about it. Thank you. For everything."

"You're welcome, love. Read the spell. Light the fire."

Nodding, Kelly took a deep breath, starting the chant that would take Emmanuel away from him. By the end of the words, Emmanuel had started to shimmer, the lashing tail all but invisible. When he touched the long match he lit afterward to the kindling, tiny flames appeared, and the spot where Emmanuel had stood was suddenly empty.

He blinked, assuring himself it was the wood smoke that made his eyes sting.

Goddamned fucking book.

Kelly really didn't believe in magic, anyway.

The little bell over the door of Kelly's shop, because he didn't call it Uncle Noel's store anymore, jingled, making him glance up from his book. A tall man came in, turning immediately to the case that held the Grimoire Erato, shined and locked firmly, the little brass plate still proclaiming it not for sale.

"Hey, can I help you?"

The man didn't answer right away, so Kelly slipped out from behind the counter, ready to give the 'gee it's nice, but not for sale' spiel he had given at least once a day since he'd reopened the shop. Christmas was coming, and everyone seemed to think it would make a great gift for someone.

It wouldn't.

He'd tried twice to use the spell to summon Emmanuel, but nothing had worked, proving over and over again that he just wasn't suited to magic. That first time had been a fluke.

Still, he had a pretty good life in Loyal, with new friends and a few dogs and a new online course in medieval studies that he was teaching for a community college. So he guessed he'd gotten something out of the deal.

"Sir, can I help you?"

"This is a very interesting book," the man said, turning to face him. He had hair like a raven's wing, blue and black and almost purple, and his eyes...

Kelly reached out to steady himself on the glass case, leaving a smear of fingerprints. The man had the prettiest, blue-green eyes he'd ever seen.

"It's not for sale," he made himself say through stiff lips. "You don't happen to have a tail do you?"

"Sorry." That smile, though, it was naughty and hot, not a bit surprised. "I do believe in magic, though."

His heart pounding in his chest, Kelly nodded, his hand reaching out to touch before he even thought. "I think I finally do, too, honey. I think I do, too."

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Printed in the United States of America.

Torquere Press, Inc.: Sips electronic edition / October 2007

Torquere Press eBooks are published by Torquere Press, Inc., PO Box 2545, Round Rock, TX 78680