



Anastasia Rabiya

Fire and Moon
By
Anastasia Rabiya

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Anastasia Rabiya

Dedicated to A.H. who inspired the poem which in turn inspired this short story.

Fire and Moon

Raindrops dribble against the window, shattering the evening sun.
Longing for the moon to spy on us, I call for her, my voice, a sighing whisper.
The light has changed, playing tricks on my vision
Making me question what color your eyes have become
For all is shadow and spirit between us now.

A flickering flame fights for life in the dream-like room,
Some intangible in-between where we have come together at last.

Our hands meet.
The questions fade from my troubled mind. There is only the need we share.
We must have each other.

Our bodies meet.
We were filled with painful desire, lost in longing until this moment.
No more does the flame flicker.

The fire warms our skin, stifles our breath as we lean toward each other to kiss,
Tasting each other for the first time though many times have we shared ourselves.

We cling to one another, clothed by each other's bodies, sharing our heat,
Smiling at the sensation of closeness, of oneness.
The fire lights the room, shrouding our nakedness beneath a golden veil.

You carry me down against the carpet.
We fall until our bodies are joined in sweet misery, pleasure and heat, wet warmth between us.

My voice trembles and drifts.
Yours is an echo as your mouth finds mine.
I am breathless, unable to hold back my hunger for your kiss.

With curiosity unbound, you touch my breasts, stroke my nipples, lower your lips to explore.
Leaning back against the carpet, I hold my breath, consumed by you.

Eyes close against the vision burning fire.
There is only you in this moment, all else is meaningless.
At last your lips return to mine and your body fills me.

The rhythm stays my mind.
I am alive in this moment, not turning back, not looking forward.
Passion devours my reason.

Subtle fingers trace your face above me, pausing before they flow through your hair.
Unable to hold back from you, I find your waist and urge you closer with each thrust.

Legs become a tangled mass as our voices whisper and caress.

Anastasia Rabiya

Kisses are lost and found once more.
The fire is burning down.

As the bliss of you has burnt me away, I rise above myself.
Unable to turn from the pleasure, I stop breathing, stop moving.
Stop to hear your voice cry out above me.

Back within myself, I breathe once more.
The air is tinged with ash and heat.
The scent of you is maddening.

As we both gasp for air, the moon finds us and lights our skin a pale blue.
The fire has died.
Yet, you are still with me.

Raindrops dribbled against Sarah's window, trailing down the glass as if teardrops leaked down the face of the moon framed there. The scent of burning pumpkin flesh rent the air, spicy and delicious in its own Halloween way. The doorbell rang. She took up the overloaded bowl of candy and went to pass out handfuls. Each painted face before her watched with wide, curious eyes. Their rehearsed "thank you" when the candy hit bottom sounded insincere. As the last of them marched away, she overheard him whispering to another child.

"She's a witch. I know she is. My mom said so."

This wasn't a surprise to Sarah. She knew the neighbors thought her strange and often referred to her as "...that witchy woman at the top of the hill on Finster Street". She lived alone in a Victorian house she had inherited from her father—a cold man who knew many secrets in the dark ways of magic. He had died at work of a heart attack. Although she lived by herself in her house, Sarah was not always alone.

There was one man in her life—a man who long suffered because of his love for her—and she loved him more than life itself. The moon would fall into alignment this night, and her forbidden lover would be able to cross over, to stay in her arms for a short time. Her heart quickened. She licked her lips and smiled, excited.

In her father's tongue, Sarah sang to the moon, begging for the return of what had been taken from her so long ago. Years could not make her forget the pain, though her father told her she would. She set out the talismans and herbs, trying something new this night. *Rosemary instead of sage.* She lit the small pyre in the hearth, knowing it would rage if she tended it well. "Love is like that," she said to herself. "If nurtured, it grows stronger." She set a second handful of kindling beneath the logs. "Father was wrong about us, Kaftos. He was wrong about so many things. Nothing can stop my love for you."

Lifting a small blade, she drew it across her palm, across so many scars there cut into her skin over the years. This spell was the only one she ever cast, the only reason she tried to use the magic in her blood at all. Each year she changed a small part of the ritual, hopeful that it would be the last time she need cast it. Pain seared through her. Sarah refused to flinch or cry out. His pain outweighed this small sacrifice. She did this year after year for him.

"I call you to me from the depths of Hell. I call you, Kaftos, if your heart remains true to mine. Come forth this one night when the spirits of the dead are allowed to visit the living. Appear

here with me and let me hold you once more.” Her words done, she held her hand over the flames and let three drops of blood cry down into the wood.

She held her breath, always afraid nothing would happen. It was possible Kaftos had forsaken her and given up his hope, or perhaps another mage more powerful than her father had been, had snared the fire demon into a web of servitude.

The fire caught on the log and blazed, swallowing up her meager offering. Higher it reached, until a trail of acrid smoke stained the front of the fireplace, marking it black with soot. She watched and waited, anxious.

Years ago, they met in midtown when she was but a fledgling college student. Even that was a feat. Her father had fought her about her idea that school would be a good thing, a way to improve her life. He was a cynical man, angry, hateful, and loathing of society contrary to the fact that he fit in it so well.

Kaftos stood taller than any man she knew, his dark eyes and curly, unkempt hair attractive to her. His thick, Grecian accent drew her to him, leaning closer with every word. His mouth, full and tempting, lured her to kiss. And she gave in that day and every day after that.

The fire popped and crackled. In a swift wave, dark smoke changed to gray, glittering with tiny sparkles that anyone else might think were fluttering ashes. But they were not. Gradually his spirit materialized, his shape clearer with each lap and lick of flame.

Soon he stood before her, naked and sorrowful, but as handsome as the first day she saw him. “You have not forsaken me,” he said. Bits of red and gold lingered on his tanned skin, remnants of the fire he’d traveled through to be with her.

“Never, my love. I swear it still, to my dying day. I will love no other than you.”

She walked toward him, her stomach swirling with butterflies, her eyes welling with tears. She wanted to touch him, to embrace him, to feel him against her every small moment they had this night, for it would be a long wait until the next when they would be allowed the luxury of being together.

“It hurts not to pass on,” he said, and took three steps until they came face to face. “I suffer and burn and pray for the moment I will see you through the flames, the moment I can reach for you and feel you against me.” A tear slid down his chiseled face.

The fire sputtered. Shadows in the room danced, and the color fled from the room. Sarah took Kaftos’s hand. She felt the heat of his pain there. He was human this night, but her father had

cursed him to Hell as a demon of flame for all time. Only by her persistence had she discovered a way to pull him forth from his penance.

He forced a small smile at her, his eyes always full of wonder when he looked her way. Desire, passion, love, and lust all mingled in Sarah's body. To be forbidden from ever seeing him again, she could have born, but to have him taken from her, murdered but not allowed to pass on—this curse was worse.

As though it were the first night they coupled, heat and a trill of excitement filled her. Kaftos's soft kiss against her forehead made her go wet with need. He took her other hand while his lips dragged down across her cheek, kissing, tracing, stoking her cravings. They savored the taste of each other, mouths meeting, tongues delving.

When she couldn't breathe, he stepped back and grinned. "I have had a year to plan this night." He let go of her hands to take off her dress, pushing away the fabric with practiced care. She wore nothing beneath, having planned to save as much time as possible for being with him. Kaftos guided her down to the carpet. Often they coupled first, desperate to feel each other's body, to join and recoup the passion stolen from them in life.

She laid back against the rug, breathing in the scent of his skin, a heavenly perfume she would never forget. Sarah had memorized every inch of his body, savored every touch he placed on hers, and now, this night, she prayed the spell would be broken, that he would not be returned to the flames her father had sent him to so long ago. But she knew not to get her hopes up.

For now, there was only this moment between them. She let her thoughts drift away.

The heat from the hearth warmed her. His skin touched hers, chest to chest, pelvis to pelvis. Legs entangled and parted. He smiled, and she returned his joy. The fire changed its dance to light the room in golden hues.

His length, already rigid, pressed at her entrance, slicking in Sarah's wet warmth. Pushing in swiftly, the suddenness of their union was marked by her trembling voice. Kaftos echoed her moan of bliss. Breathless and hungry for more of him, she threaded her fingers in his hair and pulled his face to hers. She devoured his mouth for a time as the paradise of him filling her set in.

He pulled back, ever the temptation, always the one in charge of their coupling, and touched her breasts, his curiosity unbound. Stroking her nipples, he lowered his lips to explore.

Sarah leaned her head against the carpet and held her breath as he consumed her. She closed her eyes, lost in the experience of him and her together. Everything else in her life held no

meaning—the bank job, the untended yard, the neighbor man who kept coming round and asking her on dates she continued to turn down.

Her cursed lover began the rhythm of their union, his sex pulling away and thrusting deep each time. She felt alive now, unwilling to look back on their past. If this was their destiny to be together only one night each year, then she would accept it and take what joy she could.

Reaching up, she watched him above her. Sweat beaded on his forehead. He too, kept his eyes open, both unwilling to miss a moment. She traced his face, pausing before she ran her fingers back up into his hair. He was close, so close that already his body was tensing. She felt the tickle of an orgasm as well. She gripped the back of his head to pull him down for a desperate kiss. That task tasted and savored, Sarah reached down to hold his waist, urging him toward climax.

Their legs became a tangled mess. She whispered his name over and over, stifled by his urgent kisses. Beside them, the fire burned lower.

A tide of pleasure tore through Sarah, and she felt her soul depart from her body, floating above their united bodies. She rose only a little ways before forcing herself back. Unable to turn away from the pleasure, she stopped breathing, stopped moving, stopped everything, and listened to hear his voice cry out above her.

She felt his length pulse with his orgasm. Kaftos held still as his body released its passion, pouring it into her to remember for another year's time.

She took a breath.

The air had gone cold around them and tasted of ash and flame. The scent of him made her dizzy with madness. If only her father could have understood. If only he hadn't walked in on them that day. If only they could have quelled their passion, but Kaftos was a wall of temptation, and Sarah, a beauty filled with desire. Nothing could change that. Like two magnets drawn together, no force could destroy the pull to be with him.

He caught his breath and rolled off of her, his length pulling free and leaving her empty. She faced him with a sad smile. "Every night we're together, I hope it's our new beginning. And every morning when the fire dies, I find myself alone. I would cast myself into Hell to suffer beside you if only I knew how."

"No, *agape*. You don't deserve to suffer. I should not have come to your house that day. I should have done everything so differently. I am a man with no honor. Even now, I am ashamed of how I claim you."

“You do not shame me,” she whispered. “We have but one night to share, one night to love and lust and be together. It’s never enough time.”

“I love you so much,” he said. “I love the way you look at me, the way you wanted me to be a better man when I was alive. I love the way you bite your bottom lip when you’re thinking, and the way you burn your love letters to me in the fire. I see them before they wink out to nothing. You give me hope when I should have none. You make me regret that I didn’t do more in life. You make me cherish the life I did have and the semblance of life I receive each year when you find a way to call to me—to bring me here with you.”

She sniffled, the melancholy always crushing at her. Sarah didn’t want to be sad with him there. She wanted to have the time other couples took for granted. She wanted the chance to be in love so long that she felt safe. Children—how she wanted that—but none of their trysts produced that comfort for her. “I love you too. Everything about you, even your recklessness.” She thought back on the evenings he would take her riding on his motorcycle. Kaftos liked speed and the feel of the wind whipping past him. She liked that about him. It gave her courage. His spirit of adventure had made her believe anything possible, even an escape from her father’s dominance.

Her father had called someone to have the motorcycle removed from the driveway after he had murdered her lover. She was helpless then, a woman at the edge of independence, but soon overpowered by the only parent she had—as she had been all her life. At times, she wondered if her father had killed her mother too. A respected, well known physician, she had thought no one would question him if she dared call the police. He knew how to erase all evidence of his crime. No body, no remains, not even ashes left behind as a clue. He had threatened to have her committed if she tried to do anything about his crime.

“What are you thinking about?” Kaftos asked, interrupting her thoughts. “You look angry.”

“I am, in a way. Angry for the time we lost, for all that’s been stolen from us. If you disappear at dawn, know that I will try again. I will try every year until the day I die to find a way to bring you back.”

He frowned and stroked her face. “It doesn’t matter, Sarah. We have what we have. I accept that. It will be enough for me.”

She sighed. The first few years he had cried in her arms, wailing about the pain, about the fire, and vanishing in a burst of gold and red like a human phoenix at dawn. But not before the metamorphoses took place. Great bat-like wings would burst from his shoulders. Horns would grow from his temples, curving and sharp at their tips. His body would become twisted and his beautiful

face distorted with the mark of a demon. She thought it a nightmare each time she pulled him from the flames to watch him suffer, a nightmare that would end the same way it always did each morning after. Her father had hidden his spell books, and many he had set to memory and burned to keep her from learning his secrets. *But I found a way. I will always find a way.* Sarah berated herself for her youthful foolishness, but that past was long gone, its effects lingering.

The fire burned itself out while she spoke of all she did the year before. It was not the most exciting conversation, and throughout almost all of it, Kaftos listened, his gaze rent with emotion. He hadn't cried before her in the last five years. In fact, she too, had gained strength enough to hide her emotions so as to make their time together sweet.

When she described the night's visitors, the jumbled mix of children and teens who struggled to outgrow the drive for free candy, Kaftos chuckled and shook his head. "In Greece, Halloween is not like that. At least, not in the village I'm from." He ran his hand up and down her back. "Maybe next year you can meet me there. Do you think it would work? I would like to see my parents' home again."

She contemplated the idea. The risk of failure loomed over her, but Sarah nodded, knowing she would try to find a way. "I have some money saved. Write down the address, and I'll arrange to travel there next year. I'm sure I can pull you from any fire on Halloween night...as long as I say the right words."

He touched the tip of his nose to hers. "I wish we could start all over again."

"So do I."

Her eyelids were heavy though she fought the urge to sleep. Kaftos pulled her against his chest and hummed soft songs in his native language long into the night. The empty hearth held no light. She feared the coming dawn. Bathed in silvery moonlight, she clung to her lover and wanted more than the few hours they had left.

His breathing against the top of her head soothed her. After a time, dreams overtook her mind, misty images of walking hand in hand in a dark place filled with trees and the scent of flowers. She was barefoot in the dream, and pebbles poked at the soles of her feet. The farther she walked, the more difficult it became to keep hold of Kaftos. His fingers slipped away. She turned, and he was gone. In the dream, Sarah called his name over and over. She ran through the fog but found no trace of him. When she tried to use her father's magic to bring her lover back, nothing happened.

* * * *

Sunlight spilled across her face. Sarah awoke, cold and alone on the carpet by the hearth. The evidence of the night's events—her soreness, the flavor of sex in the air, and the blackened wall above the fireplace—attested to what she had accomplished. One night of ecstasy. One night of love. One night but never more. She had slept through his burning, and it saddened her even more. Even those last few moments of being with him counted for something.

She didn't want to move. Although she knew she would cry over her failure, she wanted to stave off that release for a time. Sarah memorized each touch, each kiss, and every word they had shared the night before, reliving it all. In her mind she crossed off the small change in the casting of the spell. The rosemary had not worked. Next year she would try vervain.

"There has to be a way," she whispered, ever determined. "I'll find a way."

She sat up and ran her fingers through her hair to comb through the tangles. "Damn," she whispered, "he didn't write down the address." Not that she believed the spell would work in Greece, but Sarah would say anything to bring him comfort and hope. The idea of going there and drawing him from the fire had its appeal.

The night her father had killed Kaftos in the cellar, there had been no trace of what he'd done. She had searched every inch of the dingy space for some memory, a shred of cloth, a strand of hair, anything to prove she wasn't crazy, but she found nothing. A smear of soot on the far wall in the basement that never faded might have been all that remained of her lover, or it could have been there before her father banished him.

Naked, she made her way to her bedroom to pull on a robe. She needed to water the overgrown garden, take out the trash, and put the Halloween decorations away. Hopefully, no kids had vandalized anything. The year before, they'd taken to smashing pumpkins on the road. Sarah paused in the kitchen to make a single serve pot of coffee. One day she hoped it would be two. Two of all things in her daily routine.

The loneliness hit her hard at that moment. Placing both hands over her face, she sobbed. "It's hopeless," she sputtered. "I can't fix what's been done." She wondered if calling him back into a physical form year after year was what kept him from passing to the next plane. *I've been selfish. Cruel to keep asking him back like this.*

She cried until her eyes burned and no more tears would come. Then, as Sarah always did, she picked herself up and tried to continue on with life, to make it look to the outside world that

everything was okay and all was well. She knew no other way to function. Depression was not an option and would never free her lover. She pressed on, placing one foot before the other.

At the back door, she cursed herself. The lock wasn't turned. She remembered she hadn't locked the front door either, too excited to see Kaftos again. Sarah went outside, her slippers feet whispering on the leaf covered flagstone path.

Her neighbor was already out watering his roses. She heard the usual tune he always sang and the shush of his hose. "Morning, Sarah!" he shouted.

"Morning, Tom." She smiled at him over the low brick wall. Dressed in jean shorts and nothing else, he stared at her with his cool blue eyes. His muscular chest begged for attention. Sarah bent to pick up her hose and turn on the spigot.

She didn't feel like small talk today, and she didn't want to be put on the spot and asked on a date again. Handsome in his own way, Tom was no poor catch. He took care of himself—regular visits to the gym he had often invited her to accompany him to. He kept his modest house tidy. The bushes were all manicured, the lawn perfect. Even the few times she'd glimpsed inside his house, she noticed everything seemed to have its own place. But, no matter how many times he asked, her heart belonged to another and always would.

She watered the tomatoes first, her mind shutting out any coherent thoughts. Tom's singing voice lulled Sarah into a dreamy state of half there, as she liked to call it. It reminded her of Kaftos singing the night before. She set the hose down to soak the fig tree and pulled weeds nearby. The garden needed more work than what she offered, but she didn't much care at the moment.

"Hey," Tom said, drawing her eye. "I'm more than happy to help you with your yard work. Looks like you could use a hand."

She smiled and shook her head. "No thanks. I like things a little wild out here."

He scrunched up his face and frowned. "If you change your mind, let me know."

Sarah offered him a giggle. She took up the hose and edged deeper into the rows of vegetables to avoid his attention. Something had tromped through her garden in the night, smashing the spent bush beans. She stared down at the marks in the ground. *Footprints. Probably teenagers.* Her backyard gate swung on its hinges, creaking. *Not a good sign.*

Sarah finished up and waved at her neighbor. She went to the front yard to inspect the damage she expected to find. Kids were getting worse as time went on. All the decorations on her front porch were intact. Spying down the street, she saw one smashed pumpkin in front of the Parkinson's house, but that was it.

She gathered up the metal witch and black cat and set them by the front door. The pumpkins she tossed over the wall into a compost pile and picked up a few stray candy wrappers stuck in the marigolds.

Ready to go inside and hide once more, she turned the handle on her front door and opened it wide. Muddied footprints led across the tile into her house. She sucked in a breath and looked down at the porch. Smears of mud and what might be toe prints showed there too.

“Hello?” Sarah called, her voice shaking.

She knew she ought to turn right around and get Tom’s attention. He could call the police. But she knew there could be another possibility.

“Kaftos?” She swallowed and took a step inside. “Are you in here?”

The scent of coffee made her mouth water. She heard the familiar clink-clink of a spoon hitting the inside of a ceramic mug.

“Sarah?” His voice made her heart skip a beat.

She ran across the living room and into the kitchen. Dressed in nothing but a pink towel from her bathroom, her lover stood by the kitchen counter, stirring coffee and looking completely lost.

“I thought I was dreaming.” He rubbed his chin. “I thought...at any moment the flames would take me. When they didn’t I went outside to watch the sunrise. I thought then that maybe I was dead.”

“You walked in the garden?”

He nodded. “I don’t remember mud being so cold.”

She came to stand before him, looking up into his eyes. “By the Goddess, my love, it’s happened.” Fingers traced his lips, his face. Sarah cried again, but this time her tears were joyful. After eleven years, she finally got her wish. A new beginning, a chance to start over. She swore she would not take their time together for granted.

About the Author

Anastasia Rabiya writes erotic romance, paranormal erotic romance, and fantasy. She often crosses genres in order to follow her muses into the darkness where they seek out destiny in all its forms. She believes in fairies, demons, angels, magic, passion, chocolate, supportive friends, e-books and writing critique groups. Her deepest desire is to pursue her creative dreams and realize them. Every spare moment she devotes to writing for her haunting muses.

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