

# WHAT ROUGH BEAST

*by Katrina Relf*

*“Am I a man?” – words that I was loathe to speak because, in truth, I already knew the answer – even before Father’s response “Part of you is”.*

*“And the part that is not?” – that inhuman being who shares my body, my mind. How could I expect Father to know, when I myself cannot comprehend the atrocities of which it is capable. Nor what hatred it harbours within itself. How can such a creature live within me? What freak of nature made us as one? I try, with every fibre of my being, to be a man – the man that Catherine deserves. But it is always there. Catherine has seen him – she has been there, she has witnessed as he tore men apart, and yet she can still find it in her heart to love me, to forgive me for sharing my body with a demon.*

*Would it have been better had I never been born? Why was I born? Why was a creature such as I ever created? Those who know me can look upon me without fear, but, to a stranger, I am a terrifying apparition. I will never forget the horror on Catherine’s face the first time that she beheld me. That same disbelief that I see in her eyes every time she witnesses his evil savagery. Why, why can’t I be a man? A man who can look upon himself and not feel utter loathing at what he sees? Who can walk in the sunshine and not hide in the shadows, lest somebody sees him and fears he has beheld Satan.*

*Why can’t I be a man? A man who could love Catherine as she needs to be loved, as she was born to be loved. Not a creature whose hands can rip flesh apart, can kill as a wild animal kills. How can she bear to be near such a creature, to be loved by him, to be touched by him?*

*She has been there when I have lost myself to the beast within, as he has gloried in his power. She has watched in horror as he slaughtered those who would harm her, who would destroy his world. The outsiders came to the Tunnels. They killed those I loved, and Catherine would have suffered and been slain at their hands. They deserved to die. But why was I their executioner? And why did Catherine have to witness as the beast tore them apart – glorying in his power? I was never as lost as I was that night, never more ashamed that she saw me as I was, and never more humbled by her love.*

*Yet my mind still tells me that I should leave her, leave her to live the life that she was born to live. But my heart tells me that I cannot let her go. For in her eyes I see more love than I have ever known, more beauty than in a thousand sunsets, and, when I hold her in my arms – if only for a moment – I am a man.*

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