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*A story from the Dreamspinner Press 2015 Daily Dose collection **Never Too Late**.*

Unlikely hero Lord Adem Heliodor saved his queen's life during the Screaming, a magical attack on his city, but his broken nerves have forced him into an unwanted early retirement to his country estate. Adem thinks his life is over, but retirement holds some surprises. First, there's his new librarian, who turns out to be not just the first love he thought was dead, but also someone surprisingly knowledgeable about political intrigue. Then there's the assassin in the orchard and the discovery that the Screaming was just the first attack on the city.

Lord Heliodor's Retirement Details

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Author : Amy Rae Durreson

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From Reader Review Lord Heliodor's Retirement for online ebook

Skye Kilaen says

Fantasy M/M romance with older characters, one of my comfort re-reads (despite some scary bits). After a long, successful career in public service, Lord Adem Heliodor is asked to retire when it becomes clear to everyone that trauma from a terrifying magical attack is making it impossible for him to work. Since he was a hero during the attack, it seems terribly unfair to Adem, but what can you do when the Queen sends you away? Go back to your country estate and expect boredom, that's what. Luckily for Adem, and probably his staff, his long-lost love Corun turns up - which is a big surprise, as Adem thought the man was dead. I loved seeing older characters get their romance back, and the space Corun makes for Adem to process his trauma is a lovely thing. The pacing of this story is perfect for the hurt-comfort and healing to be well underway before dangerous plot stuff pops up. It's lovely and warm, and the villains get their dramatic comeuppance in the end.

Crystal Marie says

This is another one of those books where I was caught between a 3 and a 4 rating. If I had rated it up until the last 10% of the book, I would have given it a 3, but the ending was satisfying enough to end up a 4. I'll admit, I'm not sure I would classify it as a 'romance' though. Historical suspense sorta kinda. The romance between Adem and Cory was an aside to the actual storyline, in my opinion, which ended up working out.

Adem saved his queen from the Screaming, a strange plague that once touched by someone who has it, a person will start screaming and then bleeding from every orifice, dying soon after. Then, a short while later, he ended up screaming at her, thus precipitating his early retirement. Sent to his home in the country, which feels more like a banishment than anything, he becomes reacquainted with a man he thought long dead. But before they can have their HEA, an assassin comes after Adem. Now, time is against them as he and his man work to thwart a man intent on destroying their country in any way he can through sorcery.

I have to admit, for such a short story, the author did an incredible job at putting this all together without making it feel rushed. While historical isn't usually my thing, I enjoyed the fantasy-esque, historical slant. It added a nice touch of realism to it.

Definitely 4 stars.

Reviewed by a-nony-mouse for Crystal's Many Reviewers

Copy provided for review

Alison says

I must admit that I really enjoy Ms Durreson's stories, and this one was no exception.

"Lord Heliodor's Retirement" is a wonderful combination of emotion and intrigue. Lord Adem Heliodor

saved his queen's life from an unknown spell that has gained the nickname 'The Screaming' a few months ago but since then has been experiencing PTSD symptoms (of course, being a fantasy they don't call it that, but it's obvious that's what it is). Unable to do the job he loves after being forcibly retired to his country estate, and with no close family or friends, Lord Heliodor is at a loss until a long-dead lover returns and refuses to let Adem sink further into depression.

I really enjoyed the way that Ms Durreson managed to squeeze so much into a short story without making it seem crowded or too short. The attack labelled 'The Screaming' happens before the story begins but the horror of it is communicated well, and the intrigue is well-constructed.

Definitely a must-read for lovers of well-built fantasy worlds, intrigue, lovers reunited, regardless of whether they prefer short or long stories. I usually prefer longer stories but this one is on my re-read list. It's likely I'll re-read it several times while waiting for the sequel to Ms Durreson's Reawakening.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

First of all, I'm SOOOO happy to finally read a story with MCs in their **50s** that isn't an established couple story! You go, Amy Rae Durreson! I really liked that we got to see some more mature guys get their HEA.

I'm not a huge fantasy reader nor am I a fan of romantic suspense, but I was intrigued by the premise of this story. I'm not super brave when it comes to stepping outside my comfort zone, but I'm glad I tried this one. The story was quick, sweet, and steam-free (that last part... not my favorite thing), and I read it easily in one sitting. However, I think that the author tried to do a bit too much in too short a time period.

Even with second chance love stories, I like there to be a lot of build-up and relationship development. While we did get some here, I really needed more to fully get behind the two MCs as a couple. They were good together, but they felt very companion-like, rather than passionate. I think I wanted more romance and sexual tension than what we got.

The plot was pretty intriguing, but, again, I wish we got more of it. I think Amy Rae Durreson had a lot of good ideas with this story that could have used another 100 pages to develop.

I think most readers will enjoy this story. It was well done and entertaining, even if it wasn't a LOVE for me. Fans of older MCs and second-chance romance will want to snatch this up.

Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Lilia Ford says

3.5

Everything of Durreson's is well worth reading. This story had solid fantasy world-building and engaging leads, with the added plus of depicting the love of older folks not in their teens or twenties, which this middle-aged reader really appreciated. The story is very short, and though Durreson does a lot with the scant number of pages, I couldn't help feeling like it would have benefited from a longer treatment--the ending

especially felt more rushed and artificial than it might have. I gathered the story was originally part of an anthology so the problem was likely there from the beginning. Either way, this was a sweet, well-imagined tale, with the added benefit of reminding us that love and desire do not suddenly cease the second you turn forty.

Serena Yates says

Sometimes it is those who seem least likely to be heroes who end up saving the day. But since they are not used to being brave, they often find it difficult to deal with the fallout. Lord Adem Heliodor is a man who showed unexpected courage in the face of a horrible threat – and if this were a contemporary story, the doctors would tell him he suffers from PTSD. This is a fantasy though, so the terms are different, but the facts are the same. Adem will need to redefine his life, and it isn't an easy journey for him. It was, however, an enjoyable one for me to read!

Nobody, least of all Adem himself, would call Lord Heliodor a hero – yet he has done a lot for his queen and country. In the process of fighting the Screaming, a nasty curse that turns people into bloodthirsty monsters, his health and nerves took a beating, and now his self-control and self-confidence are no longer what they used to be. He withdraws to his country home, more reluctantly than not, and is supposed to be retired. A state of affairs he does not easily tolerate, and if it weren't for Corem, I don't think Adem would have survived the enforced state of relaxation.

Corem is an unexpected surprise, and Adem takes his time to accept everything his lover from over thirty years ago represents. Corem used to be a soldier, and his skills come in very handy when things at the supposedly peaceful country estate start escalating. Both men are no longer as young as they once were, but the passion between them turns out to have survived the years of separation extremely well.

If you like fantastical stories with magic, curses, and royal etiquette, if the tale of two older men reconnecting and discovering there is still a lot to live for sounds interesting, and if you're looking for a read that is a great mix between an action adventure, a spy novel, and a mature romance, then you will probably like this novella.

NOTE: This book was provided by Dreamspinner Press for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

♣ Irish Smurfétte ♣ says

4.5 Youbetchursweetbippy stars on Prism Book Alliance®

Amy Rae Durreson knows how to plop me down right in the middle of whatever place her characters find themselves. Her descriptions of physical surroundings are imbued with emotion and attitude. Beyond dialogue, beyond thought, the way the characters interact with their surroundings tells me just as much about them as anything else. This is no easy task.

The valley was too low and damp for vineyards, but hops grew here by the row, and the air smelled thick,

green, and faintly sour.

Only someone who knows the area could have an opinion on what could or couldn't grow in a certain location. This tells me the character has a relationship with this place, grounding them, giving them depth.

Anyone who has smelled something green knows exactly what that means, and it creates a connection with the character at a base level. And why is it sour, what's causing that? My curiosity has been poked.

All of that from a single sentence in describing 'place'. Yup, love it.

She's also having fun with the character names. They're gemmy.

Her stories often include some humor and this is no exception, both in the names and the way Adem and Corun treat each other.

The premise is lovely and executed just as wonderfully, all set against a background of political nastiness that has manifested itself in life-altering ways for many within the kingdom.

But back to the loveliness: here we are, two guys in their 50's, navigating the changes in their lives that come with entering that next phase, away from active service to queen and country and towards... retirement. From the get go, I was solidly with them, biting my lip as I smiled a knowing smile, and hoped, watching these two. What would their future hold?

Yes, that's right, mature character alert. Again, *Mature. Character. Alert.* Well done, at that.

Corun kissed him again, another of those leisurely, all-consuming kisses that made Adem's thoughts slow down as his heart beat faster and stronger.

Sweet. Purposeful. Exhilarating.

There were a few places where the transition between two settings or times felt abrupt. A few times I had to reread a couple of sentences to make sure I hadn't somehow skipped something.

As I mentioned above, humor plays a role. How could it not with two guys who have known each other since they were teenagers? It also means there's pain, and loss, and difficult issues and past decisions that must be confronted. They talk and kid with each other, all while trying to have honest conversations and make some progress, adding more dimension to their relationship.

Like some of Durreson's other stories, she mixes what feels like historical with mystery and a taste of the paranormal, with a side of surprise for good measure.

I want more of Adem and Corun. There is a seriously awesome foundation that could become a series with these two. This is my official request, Ms Durreson: more of Adem and Corun, if you please. :)

Edited: because uhhhh more than half the review didn't show when I first posted. What gives, GR? O_o

Tess says

3.5 stars

Another book with older MCs! Adem (Lord Heliodor) and Corun are in their mid-fifties, reconnecting for the first time in 37 years. Adem has been forced to retire to his country estate where he finds Corun working in his library. They pick up where they left off when they were young lovers, but not all is what it seems and there is evil approaching. Although I liked parts of this, the romance fell a bit flat to me -- there wasn't much tension at all between the two MCs.

Shira Glassman says

This is romance between older men (yum), in a fantasy/costume-drama setting, with a speculative adventure plot woven seamlessly into the relationship. A government official is sent home to his country estate when his PTSD from saving the queen from an undead horror (his close friends all turned into zombies and he had to kill them) starts to give him an erratic temper. Turns out the horror isn't quite finished, and he and his childhood sweetheart, who he's recently back together with, are right in the middle of solving it to save the country.

A good chunk of the first half of the story, the romance, focuses on the main character's trauma from his experience with the horrors that happened before Page 1. I feel that this is a solid rec for people looking for SFF depicting emotional healing. Also a good rec if you're a fan of court intrigue. And I appreciated the detail about how the main character stayed in the closet for a chunk of his career not out of shame or concern for his reputation, but because his openly gay boss-at-the-time would have sexually harassed him. I like that kind of realism *and* it creates historical fantasy where same-sex pairings are accepted. I'm always going to be a fan of LGBT people overcoming problems and obstacles unrelated to homophobia/transphobia.

I liked the two main characters, their relationship, and I also liked the secondary characters as well. A young queen with a spymaster reminded me of my own characters, so I found myself crushing on the spymaster, Obsidian, a little as well by accident. (So many people in this story have rock names that I felt like I was watching Sailor Moon or Stephen Universe, but given that I've done similar things in my writing I know I live in a glass house!)

I like the fact that this was same-sex romance with plenty of kissing but sex scenes that faded to black. I have nothing against erotica but it takes specific positions or acts for me to actually care about who's doing what to whom, so I'm fine with a line about someone's body being pleasingly solid and then a section break. Plus, I like being able to *choose* whether my SFF reading includes sex or not like straight people do and not *have* to have a sex scene just because the main characters are queer.

B says

Wonderful read, short but oh so satisfying.

Joyfully Jay says

A Joyfully Jay review.

4.5 stars

Lord Heliodor's Retirement is a fast-paced read with its fair share of angst and a truly horrifying magical curse. The author does a good job of giving background to the story with a decent sense of place. Worldham isn't given any extraordinary characteristics, but as a reader I felt I understood it and the hold it had over Heliodor. The author's writing style has an easy flow that suits the pacing and overall structure.

Adem and Corun are a sweet couple and, while we don't know a great deal about their pasts, we are given enough to flesh out their individuality and, to a lesser extent, the bond they share. I loved that Adem was a man who understood his limitations but had no interest in succumbing to them. He and Corun have a genuine love of country and an inherent bravery that make them wonderful, if somewhat unexpected heroes. Their affection for one another reads as a little hurried, but overall it felt like a realistic extension of what they had all those years before. This was a real strong point and no easy task given the confines of a novella, so I give the author major props for making their relationship feel natural. The only weakness was the resolution, which felt rushed and a bit anticlimactic. It just didn't seem to have the same easy flow as the rest of the novella, but it is such a small part of the story that it doesn't detract too much. So, aside from a few issues, I definitely enjoyed Lord Heliodor's Retirement and recommend it highly.

Read Sue's review in its entirety [here](#).

Amy Durreson says

When Dreamspinner put out a call for short stories with older couples, I leapt at it. I'd had a piece in their previous anthology on the same theme, Snow on the Roof, which I'd loved writing. I wanted to write something with a very different setting from that piece, which is a gentle contemporary. My first instinct was to try and write a historical, a Regency about a soldier trying to adjust to civilian life. It didn't work out, so I decided to switch focus to fantasy. I kept the idea of someone being forced into retirement and then had to decide who he was and why he was being made to retire.

I switched focus from soldier to lifelong civil servant, someone who defined himself by his duty. So then I had to decide why he was having to resign and came up with the idea that he was the survivor of a really nasty magical attack and suffering from PTSD. Examining that within a fantasy setting seemed interesting, so I sent him off to his country house to be reunited with his long lost lover.

Except I'd put that curse in the backstory, and so my sweet little hurt-comfort story grew a plot. With pirates, curse magic, and spies. That's the fun of writing secondary world fantasy--sometimes the world springs up around the characters, rather than the other way round.

Ije the Devourer of Books says

Lord Heliodor

This was really good.

A short story with excellent storytelling. Lord Heliodor is sent off into retirement only to encounter his lost love and to find himself embroiled in a conspiracy which he thought had ended.

It is great to have a fantasy adventure which is told so succinctly without losing anything and which doesn't feel rushed. It is also fab to have a story about an older couple. I would love to read a longer story about this world.

Lovely storytelling.

Julio Genao says

agreeable novella featuring an interesting and charming couple in the over-50 demographic. good fun :-)

Seeilin says

Way too short, yet captivating :D I would have loved to read an epilogue but maybe there will be more? One can hope, right? :)
