

# KITHBOOK: Eshma



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## Author's Dedication

For Granny and Aunt Pat, who taught me how to tell stories right and live the eshu life in the first place; for Andy, who took every step ahead of me and made sure it was safe; for Us (you know who you are), because you put up with the same stories over and over again and, most of all, you know how much you mean to me; and for Aly, the shining light that I've been walking toward all my life.

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# HOW ESHV GOT THE WORLD TURNING

So it came to pass in the early days that late one night a motley of changelings was sitting around the Tree, trading stories. Troll told a story of bravery and honor, and the others were impressed. Sluagh spoke of a time when dark things crawled across the earth, and the others shivered. Satyr's words wove a tale of great passion, of love fulfilled at last, and the others smiled and cheered. Not to be outdone, pooka rose and solemnly related a fable of great nonsense and hilarity, and the others roared with laughter. Even red-

cap told a story, and the others thought it worthy indeed, though none of them touched his food for some time after.

When at last all the kith had finished their tales, sidhe rose and stared imperiously down at the lone ELEGBARA, child of Eshu, who had sat silently at the outside of the circle the entire time. "So, wanderer," sidhe said haughtily, raising his shining golden goblet in a mock toast, "it seems that your customary place has been taken already, for we have heard all manner of fantastic tales tonight, and you have yet to speak at all. What say you to that?"

The ELEGBARA said nothing.

"What's the matter, strange one?" asked sidhe, trying to goad him to action. "Are you offended that we have usurped your role?" Still the ELEGBARA remained silent, and now sidhe began to become angry, for there was something in the ELEGBARA's small smile that made sidhe feel foolish, and if there's one thing that kills a sidhe with fury, it is appearing in any way undignified. "I'll wager it's because you know you don't have a story to top the ones we have heard tonight."

Of course, the ELEGBARA could not let a challenge like that go unanswered, as sidhe well knew, and while he had been content to listen before, he now rose to his feet and strode to the edge of the circle, where the heat from the fire was strongest. The other kith gathered before him to listen, for

all loved the Elegbara's tales of adventure and far off lands and were eager to hear his words. This made *sidhe* jealous, as it always did, but that itself is a tale for another time.

The Elegbara began, "One day, in the long ago times when the *orishas* walked alongside men and the great paradise of *Ilesha* was no farther than a two-day walk from anywhere in the world, *Eshu* was relaxing in the shade of a *Tg* tree. All of a sudden his rest was interrupted by the sounds of many feet approaching. *Eshu* looked up and saw all the kings of the world coming toward him, their faces streaked with tears and their eyes wide with fright.

"Coming to him, they threw themselves at his feet and wailed as one: 'Oh, *Eshu*, most favored of the *orishas*, save us, save us! We beg you, take these *sacriŧces* to *Olorun* and beg him to set the world right again.' And they laid many treasures of gold, silver and ivory at his feet, for *Eshu* was the messenger of *Olorun*, the greatest of the *orishas*, and would carry prayers and *sacriŧces* to him from all corners of the mortal world. Seeing these great treasures, *Eshu* began to get an idea, but first he put on his most serious face and scowled down at them.

"What do you require of mighty *Olorun* that I should trouble him with your worthless trinkets?" he asked. And the kings of the world trembled and said to him, 'Ojo, the bringer of dawn, and *Iku*, keeper of the darkness of death, are quarreling over a maiden. Each wants her for himself, and until