

Can't Help It

by Gelsey

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"How'd you do that?" A boy's face pokes through the hedge, and I eep. He scared me!

"Do what?" I ask. I'd been dancing around outside and... oops. Mummy and Daddy are always telling me to not go close to the road in case I ax-dently do magic.

"Make all them leaves swirl and look like a person and stuff?" Two more heads appear, and I back up, clutching my Lissy doll.

"Um, I dunno?" They make me want to go away. The first boy's eyes go all squinty and mean.

"Tell us how, you freak."

"I'm not a freak!" I declare. Ab'forth always tells me name-calling is mean and to not let Albus or anyone do it.

They start pushing through the hedge they're older than even Albus, and bigger too! "How, you little weirdo?"

I turn and run for home at the top of the hill. I hear them behind me. They catch me, though, and I fall down hard and start to cry.

"I don't know!" I wail, curling protectively around Lissy. It hurts. Daaaddyyyy, it hurts! "I can't help it, I don't know, don't know, I can't help it!!" I scream until everything goes dark.

~o0o~

"What's wrong with her?"

Mummy's talking to that weird man who just finished waving his wand at me. The sun hits something shiny on his robes and reflects off of it.

Oh, how pretty shiny. My eyes follow it.

"... as far as I can tell, she's repressing her magic until she has no other choice than to let it out. She can't help it. It's highly unusual and rare but sometimes with trauma like she received..."

Ooh! There's a spider web in the corner. I wonder if the spider's there. I climb onto the bed and stand on tiptoe to look.

"Ariana, get down!"

There is a spider! Ooh, it's very neat. I wonder if it will climb onto my ha...

"Ariana!" Mummy grabs me, and I sigh as she sets me on the ground.

"But, Mummy, there's a spider..." She hushes me and turns back to the weird man.

"She's been very... odd ever since the incident. Is there anything we can do?" I sit in a chair and examine my foot. Toes are funny.

"Unfortunately, sometimes it happens. She might get better, but chances are that she won't recover completely. She'll need constant watching and care. St. Mungo's would be..."

"No, and you won't tell them either."

Mummy looks sad. It's my fault, isn't it? It's always my fault, it's all my fault, why is my skin crawling I can't breathe the air is so thick. The pictures on the wall shake, and I cry because I don't want to do magic -- doing magic gets you hurt.

The pictures explode, and the dresser drawers spew clothes all over the place. Mummy scoops me up and holds me tight. "Shhh, baby, it's all right. Shhh."

It hurts, and then it slowly goes away. "I can't help it, Mummy, don't be mad." I cling to her and sob.

~o0o~

I want to go outside. All I want to do is go outside! "Mum! Please, I want to go!" I yell at her, stamp my foot like a little kid. I'm just so angry it's not like I'm asking to go to town!

"No, Ariana. It's not safe, and I don't have time to go with you today." Mum pulls her grey hair back. I don't notice how tired she looks or how wrinkled her hands have become.

"I want to go outside! You never let me go anywhere!" Anger courses through me. I don't understand it, I never have; it makes me want to scream. The feeling leads to that uncomfortable, fearful itch under my skin, the creeping fullness that scares me.

Fear multiplies the anger which multiplies the fear. "Mother!"

Her face looks drawn, but I'm beyond caring. Things might be different if Aberforth were here, but he isn't. He's at a friend's place, and Albus is upstairs reading.

"Calm down, Ariana, breathe," she says, reaching for me.

Lights explode behind my eyes, and darkness takes over. When I wake, Mum is on the floor, too. I feel weak, and I crawl to her, but she doesn't move.

Albus comes crashing down the stairs and stops, aghast. "Ariana, what have you done?"

Tears roll down my face. "I can't help it, it just happens. I can't help it. Make it better, Albus, please."

But no one can make Mum better now.

~o0o~

I stare. I can't help it. He's like the sun, bright and shining. His light chases away the shadows that try to bite me. I don't go outside much, but when he's here, I don't want to anymore.

I sit in my corner, book open, but I'm not reading. How can I? He's so much more interesting.

Gellert Grindlewald. I taste the name when no one is listening.

He sees me watching and smiles. It's a smile only for me. He says such wonderful things. He told Albus I shouldn't hide. That once they change the world things will be different. I can go places without being afraid.

That would be nice to not be afraid. To not stay inside. For Aberforth to not worry when he goes to school.

Gellert says he'll change the world for me.

When I heard that, I danced around the room. Albus glared and yelled for Aberforth, but Gellert danced with me. I can still feel his hands on my waist.

~o0o~

"You shouldn't go downstairs, Ariana. It bothers Albus," Aberforth tells me softly as he leads me around the garden.

I frown. "But I like it downstairs." Gellert is downstairs. I didn't realize I said that until Aberforth glared. I hate making him upset; it's all my fault. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." The air feels thick, and magic wells up, filling my skin. I can't help it. It frightens me, and I cry. I don't want to use magic.

His face smoothes, and he hugs me, keeping me together, keeping me safe. "Shh. It's all right."

The pressure inside me surges and then fades, the tide going out.

"Look, Ariana." Aberforth waves his wand, and the bellflowers start chiming and the crickets play a melody.

"Oooh, pretty." I sit and listen, playing with the Locating Lapis on my necklace. Aberforth says it won't let me get lost. It's pretty, too. But Gellert is beautiful. "Do you think I shall ever marry, Aberforth?" I ask, heedless of interrupting his impromptu outdoor concert.

He doesn't know what to say. Ha, I surprised him! "Someday, maybe. Why?"

I don't answer. Humming, I stare at the sky and think of Gellert.

~o0o~

I don't understand. Why are they arguing? It's so loud, I don't like it. Make it stop!

Aberforth shouts at Albus; he does that often. I hide behind Aberforth -- he always takes care at me. Gellert just leans against the wall, watching. Why doesn't he stop them?

Gellert, I'm scared. Make them stop. The words are frightened away as the magical tension in the room increases.

I reach out and tug tentatively on the sleeve of Aberforth's robe. "But I want to go," I whisper. "I want to go with Gellert."

"You see, the girl will be fine," Gellert drawls. His voice makes me shiver. "She *wants* to go."

I beam at him, basking in his approval. I wilt a moment later when Aberforth speaks. "She doesn't know what she wants, *Gellert*. You can't drag her from place to place while you rally supporters for your little cult. It won't be good for her."

I stare at him, eyes filling with tears. I can do it! I can! I tell him that, voice wobbling.

"We're going to do great things, Aberforth! Don't you understand? You need to finish school, and I'll take care of Ariana!" Albus yells. He's scary when he yells.

"I said NO." Aberforth pushes Albus, sending him careening into Gellert. All of a sudden they all have their wands out, and there's bright lights and magic!

I scream and scream, and then Aberforth is screaming too! Gellert is laughing, but Aberforth is on the floor screaming. Albus is trying to get Gellert to stop what he's doing.

I grab onto Aberforth, try to make him stop, and it hurts! Merlin Mummy Daddy Aberforth Albus it hurts make it stop make it stop!

And it does stop, but my skin hums, itches, screams. Something explodes, and I can't stop crying. I see the spells flying, and all I want is for it to STOP. I stand and try to make it.

Then I'm on the floor, and everything is fuzzy. It doesn't really hurt.

Someone is crying. "Why did you do that, Ariana?" I can't tell if it's Albus or Aberforth. But Gellert isn't there. Where is he? I want Gellert.

Someone holds me, trying to keep me together. I feel floaty. "Don't die! Merlin, don't die!"

"I'm sorry," I whisper. "I can't help it."

Author's Notes: Now here's a pairing I never thought I'd write! I do hope I made it work. I think I'm going to add a little to the beginning at a later date before I archive it.

I wrote the last scene according the Aberforth's version in *Deathly Hallows*. Ariana was fourteen or fifteen at the time, more than old enough to have a painful crush on someone as charming as Gellert Grindlewald.

This was written for the recent Romancing the Wizard challenge on LJ.