

The Elements Of Magic

by great greasy git

Like fire and water, wind and earth, ice and time, light and dark, the lives of Severus Snape and Hermione Granger intersect in a myriad of ways. A series of surreal vignettes, each with a different elemental focus. AU

Flamma

Chapter 1 of 2

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Author's Notes: *This story is inspired by the amazing work of Chicxulub, specifically "The Seven Transgressions of Severus Snape" which can be found at Ashwinder. I highly recommend you all read it, for it's brilliant.*

A HUGE Thank-You to my wonderful beta Sophi, who stepped up to the challenge, even though AU fics were not her favourite. She's awesome.

Our deliciously snarky potions master and his sinfully studious pupil belong to JKR, and sadly, not me.

Flamma

She cannot tell you when or why. She does not know how the situation came to be.

Her perceptions of the world have coalesced into this one moment, into the feelings that burn through her body and spark from her skin to his.

It is not how she had imagined it would feel, this frantic, dirty coupling. The dungeon wall is cool and rough beneath her heated body. Her skin blazes through the thin fabric of her half-ripped shirt. With each frantic thrust, jagged pebbles stutter down her back, mirroring her nails down the heavy woolen robe that covers his spine. His cauldron calloused fingers char her flesh, the circular wounds like the tracks of some ancient creature roaming her heated figure.

It is not how she had imagined it would smell, this selfish, wanton, possession. The stench of sweat and exertion overwhelms her. It is as if he possesses her fully – even his scent, heavy and male, penetrates her nostrils, filling her. His musk is fiery, the pungent scent of smoked fluxweed, briny murtlap and burned boomslang.

It is not how she had imagined it would taste, this forbidden, wicked union. His kisses had burned her lips as his tongue had darted, flame-quick, into her mouth. He had tasted curiously of cinnamon and peppermint. But now her lips are forced against his neck, and as she draws shuddering breaths, she licks the salt off his fevered throat.

It is not how she had imagined it would sound, this violent, secret combustion. His seductive whisper invades her brain, wrapping tendrils of smoke around her mind and coiling in the pit of her stomach.

"Yes, Miss Granger, you twisted little witch. You damnable siren. I will make you come."

As their rhythm changes, the coherency of his murmurs dwindles.

"I want... you need.... mine... oh yesssss"

The flesh of her lover's (how strange it is to think of him as that) words dissolves, and she is left with pale, angular bones of sound.

Sharp guttural exhalations.

A litany of nonsense.

An absurd prayer.

"No! Oh Gods! Yes!"

It is not how she had imagined it would look, this glorious, liberating explosion. She can see, from the corner of her eyes, the bristling tendrils of hair he has stretched in his fist – a sweat-drenched nimbus. His grip on her hair is painful as he forces her face to his, their eyes locked. The passion and possession in his gaze roasts her alive. He sends her higher and higher in the throes of ecstasy and watches his little Gryffindor firecracker shatter into a million dazzling fragments.

It is not how she imagined it would end, this sordid, fevered depredation. In one fluid motion he pulls away from her, black robes imperially swept into place. With the briefest of inclinations of his head and a rumbled "Miss Granger," he is gone. She lies jagged on the floor. Devoured by the inferno, consumed by it.

She cannot tell you when or why. She does not know how the situation came to be.

Terra

Chapter 2 of 2

She's acting out of sheer instinct. Her sense of caution seems to have buried itself deep within her mind, and ever since she got the note, pure, blind, survival urges have lead her into this muddy cocoon.

Author's Note: Just wanted to remind you, dear readers, that this is **not** a continuation of the last chapter, but a new vignette in itself.

Once again, I absolutely adore my beta, Sophi, who goes the extra mile.

Enjoy =)

Terra

She's three years old and toddling across her mother's garden, an oversized rusty watering can held high above her head like a recurring dream. The water's spilling out of the can and cascading down her back with each wonky step, but with her trademark Gryffindor stubbornness (a reference she's still too Muggle to appreciate), she thrusts her stubby chin high in the air, teeters back, and marches on forward.

"Look, Mummy. I do it too."

"So you did, little one. So you did, indeed!"

Jane Granger struggles to stifle a laugh as her darling daughter, with a triumphant grin cleaving her lips, hands her a tellingly light container. She tilts the nozzle of the can earthward and allows laughter to bubble through her as a few sparse drops fall to the ground.

"All by myself, Mummy. I did it. I did it."

"Yes, darling, you did! Mummy's very proud of you, Hermione."

Hermione is whisked into a tight embrace and whirled around. She shrieks with the unbridled mirth of toddlers as she is dropped unceremoniously onto the short, green grass. The prickly strands tickle her back, causing her giggles to swell anew. It will forever remind her of love.

She's seven years old and is tearing through the playground, drawing great shuddery breaths as she uses the heel of her hand to dash tears away from her face. She skids across ground that's as moist as her cheeks and tumbles over the muddy earth. She's still sobbing, a brutal, bitter sound that, like sandpaper, scrapes and peels her throat.

She picks herself off the ground and, swaying dangerously, stumbles her way to the farthest corner of the playground to her quiet, safe refuge. The shrubs here are not as well tended as the ones closest to her school, and tucked away in the corner is an overgrown bush that looks strikingly like her hair. Draped with pointed, unkempt leaves that defy control and bristle in every conceivable direction, it is her secret home.

She carefully parts the curtain of leaves and eases herself past them into the small hollow beneath. The trunk of the shrub is gnarled and bent like the back of an old man, so she has ample room for her petite frame. She lets the screen fall shut again and hide her away from the rest of the world.

Hermione Granger has disappeared.

She comes here often when she needs to wink out of existence, when she wants nothing more than to burrow deep within the ground. She comes here when her classmates jeer and taunt her. She comes here to try to understand the electric shivers that race through her body before the bad things start.

She traces a finger in the dirt in front of her, tears slowing down to a soft trickle. She didn't *mean* for things to turn out the way they did, but once Richard Prachett had backed her into a corner, the dynamic swell within her told her that she had crossed a line that couldn't be uncrossed.

She had just been sitting on the swing set, rocking gently back and forth while buried deep in the pages of her latest book. She was so engrossed in the world of fellow misfit, Matilda Wormwood, that she had not seen Richard and his cronies sidling towards her.

"Hey! Look who it is! Moping 'Mione."

"That's not my name, Richard! My name is Hermione."

His goons had circled behind her, blocking all possible avenues of escape.

"That's a dumb name. A dumb name for a dumb girl."

*"I'm **not** dumb!"*

"Why not? 'Cuz you read? Well reading books don't make you no smarter. That's what my daddy always said. So you're stupid, 'Mione, stupid and dumb and stupid. An' you're reading stupid, dumb books!"

And he had grabbed the book away from her hands and had begun to tear the pages out. The curious sound of the pages cleaving from their bindings, like the ripping open of the velcro straps from her old shoes, had brought her to her feet in dismay. She had felt an irrational sense of grief, as if the fictional girl had died and left Hermione with an empty heart. She had also felt a funny sort of pressure building from within as she watched the disjointed pages flutter to the ground, resting on the muddy earth. The queer, inside-out pressure continued to grow as Pratchett had ground the heel of his foot onto the fragments of paper, smearing them with dirty footprints.

Hermione had felt rather like a high-voltage steel cable, through which millions of watts of power coursed. She sensed that tingling push within her that swelled in tandem with her anger as she seethed with pain and loss for the little girl she never knew and hatred for the boy standing in front of her. And she was electrified.

Then, the next thing Hermione knew was that Richard Pratchett was groaning and lying face down on the ground, his nose partially obscuring the messy footprint on the page from her precious book, and the schoolyard was in chaos. Amidst children who were crying, screaming, and calling for help, Hermione had turned and fled the scene of the crime.

She sits, now, nestled deep in her sanctuary, morosely fingering the loose rocks around her. She wonders why she is so strange, so different. She honestly never **means** for the bad things to happen, but somehow they always do. She has no explanation for the fires that spring up when she's angry, or the miniature hurricanes that are spontaneously generated in cups of milk that she does not wish to drink. She certainly has no explanation for the electric shivers that made Richard Pratchett fall, inert, onto the loamy earth.

So she draws her knees up tightly to her chest and begins to wipe away the muddy streaks that decorate her calves. For now, she is grateful for her little hideaway. She can face the world another time. At this moment, Hermione is simply content to burrow deeper into her green fortress, and let Gaea clutch her closer to her leafy bosom.

She's eighteen years old and is pacing ceaselessly by the Hogwarts gates, waiting for the apple of her eye her very own forbidden fruit to return from a dark revel. Her quick, short strides trace lines in the dirt whose sharpness is rivaled only by the furrows in her brow. Her lips are chapped and bitten to the quick as she worries them between her teeth, trying unsuccessfully to ease the leaden tension that seems to want to press her body into the ground.

Hermione hears the sharp crack that heralds her lover's return. Her hands flutter to her mouth, which is open in a wordless cry, as she takes in the broken form before her. It is a wonder that he hasn't splinched during the travel. As it is, Severus Snape cannot stand, and the strength is leaving his limbs as he desperately tries to remain on his hands and knees long enough to crawl towards the gates. She pulls the heavy iron barrier towards her and is by his side in an instant. Her hands still describe elegantly useless circles in the air as they hover, trembling, over his battered face. The lines she knows so well, which crinkle easily into frowns and protestingly into smiles, are crusted with filth: blood, dirt, grime, and more suspicious substances upon which she refuses to dwell.

A few gentle levitating charms, some cleansing healing spells, and a dreamless sleep draught leave her with an exhausted Potions master tucked firmly into their double bed. It is then that her body slumps in exhaustion, and frustrated tears trace their way down her cheeks, seeking the fastest path to the floor. Feeling helpless to do more, she fingers his black Death Eater robe, encrusted with the same filth that suffocated his body. This grit, however, cannot be removed by magic. The squalid messes seem to be woven tightly into the fabric.

And so she sits, soapy rag in her hand, scraping and scrubbing at the grime in his disguise (for he will never again truly be one **of** them). She does not trust the house elves with this task; she trusts no one but herself. She scours the cloth, wishing fervently that she could scrape the stench of death from his skin, wash away the stains on his soul. Her fingers have rubbed raw with the effort, the robe is beginning to fray in her hands, but she cannot quit. Her hands fly across the fabric, her face flushed with exertion, as she screams a primal cry of frustration and continues to scrub.

She feels ninety years old, but in fact is still a few months shy of her nineteenth birthday, and is digging wildly through the muddy ground. She's blasting the dirt in front of her away with her wand as she uses her other hand to claw at the loose fragments of earth and worm her way through the fertile ground. Tiny pebbles rain down upon her body, nesting in her bushy hair and decorating her mud-streaked robes, but her thoughts lie elsewhere. An endless litany of unfinished thoughts chase around in her head.

"Dig."

"Severus ..."

"Dig faster!"

"The note oh gods the note..."

"Just dig."

"It's too late... "

"Dig... Dig... DIG, DAMNIT!"

She's acting out of sheer instinct. Her sense of caution seems to have buried itself deep within her mind, and ever since she got the note, pure, blind, survival urges have lead her into this muddy cocoon. The note had been terse but devastating.

HG

Clearing in Forbidden Forest.

Warded! No magical travel.

Secrets unmasked.

Goodbye, love.

SS

Her mind had snapped into action, formulating and discarding ideas even as she grabbed her cloak and bolted from her room, feet pounding down the stairs, flying through

the Hogwarts corridors. She knew that the only clearing in the Forbidden Forest large enough to hold Voldemort's Villains lay just past the school's boundaries. She knew that on a broom she was likely to crash into the trees and hardly had the stealth required to rescue Severus. According to what she resolutely refused to believe was the last missive he would send her, the clearing was warded against travel by Apparition or Portkey. That left only one option that afforded her the element of surprise that she so desperately needed. Her mind racing as hard as her feet, she dashed to the boundary of the Forbidden Forest and flung herself onto the ground.

There had been no time to tell the Order, no time to summon Aurors, no time to do anything but dig... and pray that he was alive. So she claws at the loose clods of soil. She gnashes her teeth, taking great mouthfuls of dirt and spitting them out, and she wriggles her way through the soft clay. She fights violently against the dull roar that pulses inside her brain and the jack hammering of her heart as she rips and tugs at the sod.

Her intuition tells her she has found the clearing, and she breaks through the ground with her wand in her hand and a curse on her lips. She emerges, a grime-streaked demoness, from the depths of hell itself. The time she had been so short on obligingly unravels itself into eternity for her. In an instant that lasts forever, she sees two pairs of eyes behind two identical silver masks. The obsidian ones, the eyes she has drowned in so many times before, widen in startled shock. The cool gray ones dance with secret mirth and terrible joy.

And she knows then before Severus's whispered "No!" before the Dark Lord's sibilant curse, before the blinding flash of light that she has played eagerly into Malfoy's trap.

How appropriate that the last thing she sees is a vibrant, all-encompassing green, that makes her think of love, loneliness and duty. How appropriate that Mother Earth once more enfolds her body as she falls, heavily, into the loamy grave she, herself, has dug.