

The Altered Elite

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Prologue

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: A grateful thanks to Noelani for her help in beta-ing this story.

19 of September, 1980 – 1 year old.

"Ah, yes – the operation went successfully, as promised."

Mrs. Granger sighed with relief. Her husband stepped past her, shaking hands gratefully with the surgeon.

"I trust this solved... the issue completely, sir?"

"Of course," the doctor replied. "Although..."

They froze. "Yes?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"I would simply expect a few... oddities," he replied.

"*Oddities?* We were never told there would be anything that—"

"Mr. Granger," he interrupted, "I assure you – the expected oddities are very slight, unpredictable... they will in no way harm the intended goal, but might in some ways surprise you, or frighten you, if you are unprepared."

"I don't understand," Mrs. Granger murmured, shaking her head in confusion. "May—may we see her now?"

"Of course, Mrs. Granger. Right this way."

20 of June, 1980 – 1 year, 9 months old.

"I s-swear, I d-didn't touch her," Mrs. Granger sobbed, clutching the child on the floor to her chest. Mr. Granger stared in horror, slowly kneeling down beside the two. Blood dripped steadily down the baby's face, stemming from a wide gash on her head. Her face was pale, her eyes wide and unseeing.

"My God... what *happened?*" Checking for a pulse with a trembling hand, he looked up at his wife, face contorted in pain.

"I don't know," she cried. "I came in when I heard a sound, I thought she hit her head, but she couldn't have, she—"

"Look," he whispered, pointing down.

Mixed in with the blood and moving as if on their own were long, gold threads that gleamed as they caught pockets of moonlight. They reached eagerly up to his pointing finger, which he jerked away as he and his wife fell back, away from the blood. The still child remained in her mother's arms, and the threads stayed linked to the babe's temple.

5 of October, 1982 – 3 years old.

"She lived, yes, but it was so *odd* how it happened. And he swears he didn't feel a heartbeat. We're so lucky she's alive today," Mrs. Granger shared quietly, staring at her cup.

"Mm, I know how you feel. Oh, Tommy, stop playing with your food – go off and play with your cousin, there's a dear. As I was saying, one time, little Robby – you remember him, don't you..."

Tommy ran into the grass, stomping down on the flowers he passed. He stopped short as he saw the small girl, lying still against the earth with her face turned to the side. Sniffing, he walked next to her, blocking the sunlight from hitting her face.

Her ear was pressed against the ground, and with eyes tightly closed, she was perfectly motionless.

He poked her. "Oi!"

She scrunched her nose slightly, but he received no further response.

"Oi," he repeated, poking her harder in the ribs.

Abruptly, she sat up and *screamed*.

He screamed, as her screaming hurt his ears, and he rammed his hands against them. She kept screaming, the eeriness of her voice echoing through his head and clawing at his insides.

Mrs. Granger and her companion rushed to the child's side, and his mother grabbed him roughly away from the baby.

"Tommy, what on *earth* did you do to Hermione?" But she brushed past him and joined Mrs. Granger in calming the screaming baby.

Tommy felt sick and fell to the floor, heaving the contents of his breakfast on the cold grass. And beneath his hands, in a moment he would never remember after awaking from a coma he would soon have, he felt *something* that had moved, something that had *responded* – not to him, but to the baby, and it rushed past all of them in a hurried leap.

A long distance away, in a dark and shadowed corner of an unnamed alley, the knife held so carefully and positioned so well against a young man's chest was suddenly wrenched out of his hand, hurtling through the air and clattering against the wall of a far-off building.

Shocked and torn between relief and misery, Severus Snape sank to the ground, weeping bitterly with his face pressed against the gravel of the path.