

And the Tree Cried

by Bardsdaughter

Her heart breaks for the boy she sheltered as she becomes the tool of his torture.

Evil In the Garden

Chapter 1 of 2

Her heart breaks for the boy she sheltered as she becomes the tool of his torture.

A/N: The wonderful world of Harry Potter is owned by J.K. Rowling. This little flight of my imagination into her world was done with no monetary gain in mind.

No disrespect to Christianity was intended by the writing of this piece, as the author is a devoted follower.

The idea for this was inspired by *The Weeping Tree*, a Holy Week cantata by Joseph M. Martin.

Inside the garden gates stands the weeping tree. In silence she lifts her weary arms against the darkened sky.

She is a gathering place for the sorrowful and a sanctuary for the grieving. Her shadows are a hiding place for the oppressed and a refuge for the lost. Under her graceful canopy there is comfort, and beneath her towering presence there is shelter from the storm.

Long ago, she was planted on a windswept hill where all could see her solitary silhouette, and though fixed in barren soil, her roots grew deep into the hearts of all who drew near to her.

*Watered by a thousand tears, her sylvan branches once held a perfect harvest, for heaven had chosen her rugged frame to be the bearer of grace. She who was cut and fashioned by hatred and violence became a tree of life. Her arms are outstretched still. (Adapted from the forward of *The Weeping Tree* by Joseph M. Martin)*

They caught him in the garden unawares, or so they thought. But she knew differently. Unmoving from her spot, she had borne witness to everything. The plotting. The planning. The passionate confessions of unending devotion from her boy and his witch sealed with kisses in the hours before this moment. The anguish of that young lioness as her friends carried her from the yard at his insistence. The screeched entreaties for him to survive, to live and come back to her so they could love for an eternity. The prayers for grace to be bestowed on the both of them lifted by all those who guarded their secret.

Then came the silence. The eerie calm she knew from youth heralded the arrival of a dangerous storm. Even her leaves refused to shift under the soft breeze's touch as her boy paced beneath them. He beseeched the heavens to allow the hurricane to pass over and leave his sanctuary untouched. To leave him unscathed. His shoulders hunched in defeat as acceptance came, and he finally confessed his willingness to make the sacrifice so long as it allowed the girl who carried his heart to survive.

It wasn't the first time she'd witnessed such a display of grief. She'd heard similar words before, back when he was little more than the toddler who'd sought shelter from his father beneath her spreading canopy. He'd begged for the man called Snape to change. To love him the way the flower sisters' father loved them. Then he'd petitioned

for his mother's safety, his little voice haggling with the Creator to take his soul instead of the one belonging to the prince's spineless daughter. The Benevolent One had seen fit to acknowledge the deal by sending a woman dressed in tartan plaid. The lady known as McGonagall wiped his tears and swept him away to the safety of the Highlands.

She'd added over a dozen growth rings before he returned to her garden for more than an hour's adventure.

He was barely more than the child who'd played amongst her branches while the kindly cat watched through those square markings around her eyes by the time he'd returned in earnest. This time, it was pleas for the life of a friend who had tossed him aside because of his savage tongue unleashed in embarrassed anger. Bargains to become the offering laid upon the altar between light and dark if only this lily would remain unharmed. It was Merlin's descendent who came for him then. And she was certain it wasn't her beloved Creator who had sent the bearded wizard in answer to her boy's cries.

Yet, despite the familiarity in the air, this visit was different. This time her boy's love was returned ten-fold by the one he beseeched the universe to protect. This time, he was not only willing to sacrifice himself, but this sanctuary. This holy place, where only months before he'd knelt at the feet of the lioness named Hermione and asked her to be his bride, would be overrun by wickedness. This sacred chapel of nature where they'd vowed their love, bound their lives and exchanged their rings in the presence of the emerald-eyed Phoenix, the lady McGonagall and the scattering of others, like the wolf and his mate, her boy and his bride considered worthy of the title 'friend'.

The air hummed with magic. Lightning flashes crackled around her as men robed in raiment as black as a moonless night sky dropped to the earth around her boy. They pounced on him like rabid dogs, mauling him. His cloak was rent. His face glistened with their spit. Someone stripped him to his waist then lashed him to her trunk with glowing lengths of rope as another wielded a ghostly whip. The sizzle of magic against flesh underscored the murmurs of encouragement from the rabble crowded around her boy and his tormentors.

"Where are they?" demanded the whip cracker.

"Tell us and we will allow you to live," offered his captor.

But her boy bared his back willingly in silent sacrifice for his lioness and her friends.

She wanted to brandish her limbs. To flay those men and their minions with the teeth of her bark. To scream to his tormentors the answers that would stop his punishment. Yet, she stood unmoving. For even the winds fled in the face of such malevolence.

A dozen crimson stripes crisscrossed his flesh before a sudden chill rippled through the crowd. They hushed their droning, and the whip stilled in its course through the air. The Snake had entered the garden.

"Severus," he hissed. "Why have you betrayed me?"

Though his black eyes shouted hatred, her boy held his tongue.

"Have you no answer?" The hairless creatures slithered in a slow circle around her boy. "Is it because of the young Mudblood? Because you have feelings for her?"

Her boy shuttered his emotions behind a blank stare, then lowered his head.

"Oh, come now." Evil came to rest in front of her boy. A skeletal hand landed on his shoulder. Her boy never flinched. "Had you only asked, I would have given her to you as a reward for your loyalty." The reptilian man bent lower. Had he a nose, it would have skimmed the top of her boy's ear. "Even after all this, if you would but tell me where the Chosen One hides, I will assure her survival."

Her boughs straightened in pride as her boy lifted his head. Black eyes met the red of depravity in defiance, yet her boy remained silent.

"Ah, Severus." The one-time master stood. "Must you make everything so difficult?" he sighed. He whirled to face the spectators. "Given our Potions master's reluctance, I believe it is time to apply a persuasion technique perfected by the Romans in the days of the one heralded as the Christ."

The knees of her roots trembled in response. The Messiah had been her ancestor's boy. One who was loved, and mourned, as vehemently as the boy being untied from her trunk.

"Lucius." The Snake stepped away from her boy. "Cover our esteemed colleague while preparations are made."

Despite the mask, she could see the wisps of snow blonde hair the soldier tried to hide. It was the traitorous friend her boy had brought to the garden a few times. He had deceived even her with his charm and suave manners. He bore a robe of darkest black on his outstretched arms. With a flourish, he draped it over her boy's shoulders, then led him away, covertly offering comfort.

Perhaps it wasn't her boy who was the betrayed.

"Our dear Severus deserves something grand, don't you think?" The Evil One turned from the loud assent rolling through the crowd. They were as thirsty for her boy's blood as this madman was.

Her leaves shivered as his cold eyes swept the garden. When he rested them on her, she knew. How could she not? Her fate had always seemed bound to that of her boy's. It was fitting that it be her arms to offer him comfort in the final hours.

"That one," the man once known as Tom hissed. He moved across the ground with serpentine finesse until he was inches from her trunk. He placed a palm flat against her bark. Her sap froze at his touch and the heartbeat of nature deep within her stilled.

"You are magnificent," he wheezed, selfishly breathing in her scent. "More than worthy of the task." He turned swiftly, the hem of his cloak disturbing last year's sacrifice of leaves at her feet.

"Peter." He waved a dismissive hand in her direction. "If you would."

She'd felt the gnaw of his kind before, this rat man standing before her with a sliver of one of her kinsmen clutched in his fist. They had nibbled on her fruits and sharpened their teeth on her twigs. They were sly and cowardly. And she would fall at this one's hand.

The man unworthy of the mask and robes adorning the other soldiers pointed his shard of wood at the base of her trunk. One downward slash, and she felt the ancient magicks bite in to her flesh like the sharpest axe blade. It rang through the dank air like a thousand hammers against a thousand anvils. Another followed. Then another, until her pulp was rent and she tumbled to the ground with a resounding crack.

Others joined the rat, pecking at her injured carcass like vultures on carrion. Some attacked her limbs, leaving them to lie rotting in the grass. She mourned their loss. Never again would she feel the embrace of her boy as he climbed them. Some laid siege to her bark, their spells peeling it from her in large ribbons. Some stood in the shadows, their wicked intent already forming the saw that would cleave her trunk and the thick bands woven by their sorcery that would complete her transformation.

In mere minutes, their worst was done and they brought her boy to her. Jeers and angry shouts were his processional as she lay there, awaiting the cruel embrace between wood and flesh. Two burly men caught her boy under his arms and placed him against her. They stretched his arms out along her crossbeams, each placing a knee on his forearms just below his elbows. Two more unfurled his fingers and held them flat against her as others placed the nails against his palms.

Her boy knew those nails. The hands that picked them up from the floor of his father's workshop were larger, calloused from working with the tools of his mastery. In

another flash of magic, they were sharp against his skin. The hammer cried out as iron met flesh and bone, wounding both her boy and her as the spikes came to rest in the splintering wood.

Surrounded by the maniacal cackles of the Dark One's concubine and her handmaidens, she and her precious burden were lifted from the ground. Spells and enchantments righted her and slid her into a hole dug a little farther up the hill than where she had grown. Cut from her roots, she slowly began to die, along with her boy, who hung cursed upon her.

Blood flowed from her boy's hands and feet. With every drop, she felt him weakening, his thirst growing. Hour after hour passed. Her boy's life poured out with every heartbeat. She wept for him, her sap flowing into his wounds even as his fled his veins. Darkness hung like a shroud over them until...

The earth trembled. Lightning bolts streaked toward the earth leaving the sons and daughters of the Light in their wake. She saw her boy's witch, flanked by the emerald-eyed Phoenix and their red-haired friend, lead the charge. The wolf and his wife followed. Then came the lady McGonagall, the earth queen Sprout, the elemental Healer, and a thousand others.

The air around her and her boy sizzled with the ancient spells until only Evil remained. The Snake glared at the Phoenix. He lunged forward, but the emerald-eyed one held his ground, deflecting each hex. Green light arched from the knobby rod in the Snake's hand, its flight straight and true towards the Phoenix's chest. With a wave of his hand, the Chosen One spun the malicious light. Death screeched victory as wickedness shattered into ashes.

The universe howled in relieved celebration, whipping the four winds into a frenzy.

Then all was silent.

Picking their way across the garden, her boy's witch and their friends approached. With great care and reverence, the emerald-eyed Phoenix, the father of the gingers, and the wolf lifted her boy from her arms and laid him on a clean, white linen cloth the lady McGonagall and the earth queen Sprout spread at her feet.

His witch knelt as his side, her tears mingling with his blood. Her boy's eyes fluttered open. His breath was ragged in his chest, and his lips trembled as he tried to part them. A moment of struggle, and his cracked voice finally broke the stillness. "Hermione."

His Hermione took one of his bruised and broken hands into hers, cradling it against the place where her heart beat. "Severus. Oh, my Severus." She gently brushed his hair from his eyes. "You can rest now, my dearest one. It is finished."

Her boy smiled and closed his eyes.

And the tree cried.

Nature's Heartbeat

Chapter 2 of 2

The battle is over, but will the tree ever feel nature's heartbeat within her splintered core?

Days passed. The emerald-eyed Phoenix returned. He brought the wolf and his mate, the lady McGonagall, the earth queen Sprout, the elemental Healer, and a throng of members of the Light with him, but her boy's pulse was not among them. Neither was the newly familiar thrum of her boy's wife. Those gathered in her garden placed her in stasis, suspended between life and death. The young Phoenix spoke of valor and honor and light, his tone somber yet filled with hope.

Then the lady McGonagall stepped forward and gently carved words in her flesh. The aging lioness' voice broke as she read them aloud for the very first time. "Here stands the weeping tree. In silent remembrance to the heroes who have fallen, she lifts her weary arms to the sky. May she be a gathering place for the sorrowful and a sanctuary for the grieving. May her shadows become a hiding place for the oppressed and a refuge for the lost. Under her graceful arms, may they find comfort and shelter from the storms. May she who was cut and fashioned by hatred and violence become a tree of life." With a soft amen, the crowd dispersed, leaving her to her lonely vigil.

Months passed. A few times she thought she caught the faint rhythm of her boy's heart, but he did not come. Still, she stood guard over the sacred ground where her boy had lain, waiting. Summer faded to autumn. Then came winter's chilly winds, and a pristine blanket covered the place she had grown.

One morning, just over ten lunar months since the day the emerald-eyed Phoenix had vanquished the Snake, the west wind carried the hint of new beginnings on his back, and she knew her wait was in vain. Despair settled around the place where nature's heartbeat once had pulsed in her core. It had been too long. Much too long. The elemental Healer and the earth queen Sprout and the lady McGonagall had failed. His Hermione's love had not been enough. Her boy wasn't going to return.

And the garden entire joined her in grief.

Then, a pulse broke the stillness. A single heartbeat awakened the dormant birds and returned the music to their throats. It grew stronger, its thrum vibrating the earth beneath her. And it was joined by another, this one familiar, feminine. Suddenly, there was a third. Its rhythm strong and steady, but newly started.

As if riding the beams of the rising sun, the trio appeared at the garden's gates. Her pulp moaned her happiness to the heavens as the hinges squeaked and her boy stepped through. At his side was his bride, her belly still slightly swollen from bringing forth life. In her arms was a bundle, tufts of silken tresses as black as a raven's wing barely visible beneath the blue knit cap. And in her boy's arms lay a sapling.

Slowly, the couple approached. Her boy's witch moved gingerly, and he watched each step with concern etched in a deep crease between his brows. "Hermione, if you're not up to this..."

Her boy's bride laid a comforting hand on his arm. "I'm fine, Severus. Poppy said a walk would speed healing."

A familiar smirk lifted the corner of his mouth. "I'm quite sure she meant for you to stick with the corridors of the castle, love. If she knew I'd taken you this far mere hours after bringing Christopher into the world..."

The young witch gave him an angelic smile. "Then I suggest we return before she discovers we're gone."

Her boy's laughter brought a surge of warmth from the very soil of the garden.

"There." Her boy pointed to a spot at the foot of her hill.

His wife smiled. "It's perfect."

A spell warmed the ground. A flick of her boy's wand removed the snow and upturned the earth. Carefully, he settled her sprouted seed into the hole. When the soil was packed around its roots and it ate its fill of the earth queen Sprout's gruel, her boy gathered his witch and his newly born son into his arms. Together, they watched the young squirrels and fledgling sparrows gather around the newest member of the garden.

"One day, little one." Her boy stroked a long finger down the newborn's cheek. "One day."

And when that day came, it would be her descendent that would claim her boy's sons and daughters as her own. Her offspring's limbs would know the embrace of their fingers and toes as they climbed. Her offspring would shelter them from the storms just as she had always sheltered their father. It wasn't finished. With God in His heaven, it would never be finished. Joy filled her and peace caressed her outstretched arms.

And the tree cried.