

The Charm

Original version

I'd pressed the daisies he gave me at the end of the last spring semester in my art history book. That took care of the first ingredient - a gift from the target of the eternal love charm.

The second ingredient was "a single tear from thine own eye". That evening I let a tear fall onto the dried daisies while I was dicing onions for a stew.

The third ingredient was a "lock of thy true love's hair". His hair was long enough to reach halfway down his back, and I might have been able to find a strand or two around my dorm if I looked hard enough, but not enough to make a lock. I thought of keeping a hairbrush here for him and collecting it that way, but I remembered how thoroughly he cleaned his hairbrushes each time he used them, and knew I'd never be able to get more than a strand or two like that.

I would have asked him for a lock of hair, but then he'd want to know why I wanted it, and I would have been too embarrassed to tell him it was for. I was pretty sure I didn't believe magic actually worked, and he certainly did not think it did. But it was fun to try it, just to see what would happen, even if I was fairly certain that nothing was what would happen.

My roommate had a shelf of books about potions and magic rituals and charms, and a hand-bound spellbook filled with recipes written in her well-practiced calligraphy. That night we sat down to a bowl of the stew I had made in front of the TV. She'd made tea with mint she grew on the windowsill. She swore by the recipe for this eternal love charm I was making, saying that if I kept it on me, it would repel many evil forces that sometimes drive lovers apart. Better safe than sorry, she told me. I couldn't argue very well against that.

I saw him the next day for lunch. We brought sandwiches to the park and sat under a tree that was thick with leaves, and I was

feeling very comfortable now that I was out of the worst of the heat. I put my head on his shoulder, and ran my fingers through his hair while he told me about his part in a group project for a physics class. I listened to him tell me how he got along with everybody in his group and what interesting things he'd learned about the subject. A few of his hairs came loose in my fingers, and I wound them around my fingers. I did this a few more times while he listened to me tell him about the pottery I was . I wondered, is this enough to make a lock, once I've tied it up with some red string, as the spellbook suggested?

I started to think, wouldn't it be a shame if the charm only failed because I didn't get a proper amount of my true love's hair? I don't properly believe in magic, but if I'm going to give it a try, I might as well try for real, I thought. I put my head on his shoulder and asked, "can I get a lock of your hair for a magic ritual? My roommate says it will bind our souls forever, and we'll spend our whole lives together if I do it right."

"Oh? But I thought you didn't think her spells really did anything."

"I still doubt they do anything really 'magical', but better safe than sorry, right?"

He agreed that it would at least be fun to try, and we wondered together just how many hairs you need to make a proper lock, so he could get away with trimming as little as possible. I showed him the strands I'd already gathered secretly, and he agreed with me that these few alone probably wouldn't be enough to make a proper lock.