

**NOVELLA: THE EIGHT AMULETS BY GIRISH RAMACHANDRAN
SUBMISSION FROM WASHINGTON STATE**

The blood red sky was an unmistakable sign. The Rain of Fire was on its way; the inevitable would happen. There was no escaping this. I jogged towards the Source, the direction opposite to that of which people were running to, screaming their lungs off.

So, was that brave of me? Yeah, probably. Stupid? Definitely. Was it necessary, though? Duh. Why else would I run to an area that would incinerate me to smithereens in a matter of seconds? (And yeah, I had equipment to protect myself but still) I sighed loudly, halting and catching my breath for a second. I was totally exhausted saving people's butts. I was one of the only people in my village who could survive trying to find a Source; that was probably why I was made to do this. That aside, I was carrying a large Water Sword (a sword that had the properties of Water AND a sword), around half of my size, which was sheathed in my belt and an Elemental Staff (A staff which could use spells of all Eight Elements if the magician was capable of doing so), which was around my height. So yeah, I was extremely exhausted. And I still had a lot more area to cover. Plus, I had to do it fast.

> I glanced at the sky. Yup, it was getting redder and redder. Droplets of fire (don't ask) were starting to fall on the ground. Even this description might seem scary to you, but wait till the Rain intensifies. You'll see the real power of the Elements.

> I looked back, to where my brother was calmly pacifying the elders and children; helping the townsfolk to get back to their magically protected homes (which I very much envied). He noticed me looking at him; he smiled encouragingly and went back to helping

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people. Thanks, bro. That was very helpful! Ugh. I would've preferred doing Caspian's job and him doing mine. Oh, and about my brother- He was pretty tall for his age, fourteen. I think he stood around six feet, his posture always relaxed and his eyes blue, calm and friendly (trust me, he's not like how he looks). He had a handsome regal face, a pale complexion and a short temper. Still, don't judge a book by its cover.

> I was nearing the Source, but I was still gasping for breath. I was so darn tired. Plus, I was wearing magical robes which would help enhance my magic, and they were probably the most uncomfortable clothes in the world. The Rain of Fire made the already hot summer even more hot. Well, I hope you got my point. I was sweating as if I was under a bucket of water that was constantly following me wherever I went, and lava was being mixed with it. Ugh, uncomfortable, I know. I was there.

> Anyway, getting back to the story. Obviously, I kept walking. But I was getting the goosebumps – I had no idea what was out there; it could range from a forty foot tall fire-breathing dragon to a small necklace levitating mid-air. But, how much ever fear I had, the vision of my parents, my village and my friends was hardwired into my brain, keeping me going. If I gave up now, there would be nobody to stop the Source from wreaking havoc on my village. The town would be burnt to ashes. Not a single survivor.

> The effects of the Rain were upon the area now; trees burnt, puddles of lava. The Rain turned nature completely- even the most beautiful sceneries would become ashes in a matter of seconds. Magic might sound great and all, and sure, yes, it helps humans a lot. But I was beginning to realize, as most good magicians would, that Magic had more negative effects than good ones. Corruption, greed, thirst for blood and power- they all rised along with Magic. Magic was being used for killing others, mostly, and to destroy places, conquer kingdoms- all bad stuff.

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But Magic was also used by good people. People who wanted to protect the innocent, kill the bad guys, blah blah. Yes. I was one of them. But, as everyone knows... where there's good, there's bad.

> I cracked my knuckles and stretched (hey, it's a habit). The Rain was getting heavier; I knew this only after a few drops of fire fell on my hair and burnt it painfully. Damn... I was almost bald. And I did NOT look good without hair. In that wrathful moment, I felt like eliminating every single person in the universe. NOBODY touched my hair... not even my brother. Not even my mother, actually. My rage was unparalleled. Giving me a haircut without my permission... was absolutely unforgivable. I was ready to go blast the guy who made this Source into a million tiny pieces.

> Since I didn't want my entire body to get incinerated, I put up a Water Barrier (sounds lame, I know, but if you see it, it'll be epic) to protect myself. Yeah, a Water Barrier, a level three advanced spell. The fire couldn't touch me now. Even though the Rain kept intensifying, my Water Barrier could protect me.

> It was evident now that the Source was near; it wasn't possible that the Rain could be so strong when far away from the Source. I braced myself for the worst, took out my staff out with my left hand and unsheathed my sword with the right. Yeah, now I looked awesome.

> There was a kind of vibration and humming (Magic does that, for some reason. Maybe it likes singing?) around in the air, which again told me I was close. And I think it was right in front of me, except, for one annoying, horrible, fact. A hill was blocking my path. I stomped my foot on the ground with all the force I could afford. The ground cracked, and I gritted my teeth, cursing. I... had to climb... a hill. And climbing large hills is the worst part of my job.

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> After reaching the top (which took a LOT of effort and pain), what I saw was definitely not what I was expecting. And yes, my expectations were pretty innumerable. And this wasn't even in the list of innumerable expectations.

> It was a man with a purple robe covered with the country flag's symbol. He was holding a large staff which was glowing dark red, as it channeled the power of The Rain. It almost seemed like he himself was The Source. Was he that powerful? Thunder boomed overhead, even though the Rain was supposed to be of Fire.

> I could sense the power radiating from the guy so far away, too. All of a sudden, the man roared with laughter.

> "Is this what my country has been reduced to?" he asked, laughing. "Sending small children to do their work, when they should be protecting the children?"

> He turned towards me, and took off his hood. His hair was grey- He was old, and he seemed pretty weak; he was only standing as he had the support of his staff. Even from a distance I could observe his features- he was pretty tall, too, and his hands had only three fingers each. His eyes were the most disturbing though... they seemed almost multicolored... In fact, it was more than just two or three colors. I counted them carefully- I could be mistaken. Just a small difference could tell me a lot. But no. He had eight colors in his eyes.

> Coincidence? I think not.

> The man laughed again. "Boy, you had better get out of here before something bad might happen to you..." The blood red sky was an unmistakable sign. The Rain of Fire was on its way; the inevitable would happen. There was no escaping this. I jogged towards the Source, the direction opposite to that of which people were running to, screaming their lungs off.

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