

## Beautiful Things

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/40632363) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/40632363>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Hermitcraft SMP</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Stressmonster101</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Alternate Universe - The Magnus Archives Fusion</a> , <a href="#">Bugs &amp; Insects</a> , <a href="#">Trypophobia</a> , <a href="#">Unhealthy Relationships</a> , <a href="#">Self-Destructive Behavior</a> , <a href="#">Loneliness</a> , <a href="#">Frostbite</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of <a href="#">From the Archives: Marginalia</a>
Collections:	<a href="#">Hermitcraft x TMA fics</a>
Stats:	Published: 2022-07-28 Words: 930 Chapters: 1/1

## Beautiful Things

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

### Summary

Stress loves beautiful things.

She always has.

### Notes

Another [From the Archives](#) character study; this one written by my cowriter Zeph, examining Stress. I would recommend also reading her statement [Skittering Things](#) for context!

Stress loves beautiful things.

She always has. When she was a little girl she collected party beads and rhinestones, tiaras and butterfly-wing pins. Not to wear, exactly, although she *would* wear them; she'd parade around her kindergarten dressed like the pink and frilly girls' section of a costume shop had fallen on top of her. Not to wear, though. Just to have. Just to hold up to the light and watch the sparkles.

As a teen, she'd upgraded to crystals, when she could get them. Iridescent flies or sparkly eyeshadow, when she couldn't. And snow. She remembers hours and hours spent out in the snow, holding it in her bare hands and watching the snowflakes through a microscope as they melted.

The doctors, when she'd been bundled into a car by her panicked parents after a day spent wandering in the subzero cold, had told her she was just lucky they hadn't had to amputate any fingers.

She hadn't really heard them. The sun was striking the icicles outside the windows into brilliant flashes, and all she'd been able to think was *I want to go out*, and *I want to hold them*, and *If I froze to death, I would be happy*.

Maybe she'd been lonely, then. She can't really remember the sensation now, not when she's so trusted her little babies are laying their eggs on her skin, but she supposes she must have been.

In school, she'd always hung around the popular girls at lunch, in the halls. They liked her well enough, and she liked to look at them, because they were beautiful, all made-up and fashionable, faces contoured into faceted crystal angles, and she loved to look at beautiful things. But she didn't ever have *friends*, really. She went home at the end of the day to her room full of shining things and her little mesh terrarium, and that must have been enough for her. It must have been.

She can't remember a lot of things, these days. It's alright, though. She doesn't mind.

The town she grew up in had had the most beautiful, pristine snow if you knew where to look. Stress did, better than anyone else. And when spring came, she knew where to look for caterpillars for her terrarium, or dragonfly nymphs, or clutches of spider eggs. Whatever she could find. One year she'd gotten lucky with the spiders, and raised a beautiful pink-and-white crab spider, its body all patterned like the petals of an orchid. Another year, a shimmering purple moth she'd found burrowing into a birch leaf as a larva.

Later, when she moved to London, she told herself she'd grown out of that. The snow in the city was slushy and temporary, and even the insects were dull, and she had a job and a roommate to worry about. She'd brought some of her crystals with her, and her terrarium folded at the bottom of a suitcase, and she slowly accumulated a variety of small carved bits of glass and ceramic from her job at the bead store, and she told herself that was enough. That she didn't need more things, that she was fine just how she was, that she couldn't afford everything she wanted anyway. Not on her paycheck, no.

She was lonely, then. She must have been. She got along with False well enough, and with her coworkers, but she *must* have been lonely, or else she wouldn't have loved that little beetle she found so much. She wouldn't have seen the way its shell flashed colors and let it climb its way right into her heart, no matter how beautiful it was.

Or maybe she would have. She's always loved beautiful things.

She's not lonely, now. She sits by ponds and lets her pretty little grubs out to play, watches the adults as they roam across her skin. She wears her hair long, so they can burrow in it when they don't want to sit beneath her skin, and she wanders the countryside, taking what she needs from orchards and grocery store displays.

It's not stealing. Not if it's to feed the little ones. She needs to stay healthy, so that they can grow strong on meat and on love. The shopkeepers would understand, she tells the grubs as they make their paths along her bones. She's even managed to convince a few of her onlookers! Showed them her babies and they fell right in love, same as her.

There are so many of them now, crawling their way over and through her. Generations and generations. Small and fragile and so, so beautiful it breaks her heart when they die.

Really, the only thing she misses is winter.

Her little bugs don't like the cold, and so she doesn't either, anymore— it hurts them, it curls them up and makes them brittle. But she misses the way the snow looked in her hands, now that she's out of the city. She makes do by watching frost crawl up the windows of abandoned barns and haunted lodges, by watching the snow reflect reds and oranges and pinks off the sunset from the safety of a blanket, beetles tucked carefully inside her skin.

She makes do, because she isn't lonely, and because she's got a responsibility to the beautiful little creatures that call her body home, and because she has all the beautiful things she could ever want, really.

And she calls it a sacrifice she's willing to make.

Who wouldn't, for them? It's just so cute, how they burrow their way into her heart!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!