Minerva and the Boggart

by Cat Feral

A "missing moment" of a certain Third Year DADA class.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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"Riddikulus!" cried Parvati. A bandage unraveled at the mummy's feet. It became entangled, fell face forward and it's head rolled off.

"Seamus!" roared Professor Lupin. Seamus darted past Parvati.

Crack! Where the mummy had been was a woman with floor-length black hair and a skeletal, green-tinged. . .

A brisk rap on the staff-room door startled them all. Professor McGonagall came into the room.

"Professor Lupin, I'm sorry to interrupt your class but . . ."

Crack! Where the banshee had stood was a student Harry didn't recognize. She stared at Professor McGonagall with stark, accusing eyes and coughed blood.

"You let me get away with B-plus work when I was capable of A-minus. When the time came that I really *needed* every scrap of the skills you should have taught me, I wasn't prepared . . ."

As she started to crumple, the girl blurred and became Oliver Wood.

" . . .You overlooked it because I was Quidditch Captain and you didn't want me taken off the team! Was winning the cup more important to you than teaching me what I needed to know? Did you think bloody *Quidditch* would save me when it came to the crunch?" On the last few words, "Wood" flung back his head as though in agony, and his face and body began to char and blacken.

The class turned to stare at McGonagall, who had gone very white. She raised her wand, and they could see her lips forming the word "Riddikulus," but no sound came out. When Harry, unable to stop himself, looked back to the Boggart, he was shocked to see that it had become him — or at least him had he been dying.

" . . . knew how dangerous it was for us to wander around at night," the Harry/Boggart was gasping, "but you only deducted . . ."

" . . .fifty points each." The Boggart blurred in mid-sentence to become a bleeding Ron. "Did you think that would stop us? You should have made it a hundred points! You should have. . ."

" . . .chained us to our beds at night, if that's what it took." It had now become Hermione. "You were supposed to protect us! You were *responsible* . . ."

"Riddikulus!" Bellowed Lupin, shaking himself out of his own shock and rushing forward. As the Boggart turned into a glowing, silvery orb, he shoved it unceremoniously back into the cupboard and slammed the door.

"All right, Minerva?" he asked, turning back to Professor McGonagall.

"I . . .yes, I think so." She gasped, swaying dangerously. She caught the doorframe and leaned on it, trying to re-gather her usual dignity. For a moment her eyes unfocussed. She seemed to speak more to herself than anyone in the room.

"Strange . . .I thought I'd learned to conquer my deepest fears. But the last time I met a Boggart was some years ago . . ."

"I know, Minerva." Lupin spoke so softly the class barely heard him, "As our lives and our priorities change, so do our fears. Sometimes in ways that we wouldn't have guessed. I'll walk you to the hospital wing, and on the way, you can tell me what you needed to speak to me about."

"I don't need to go to the hospital wing!" she said indignantly, her pallor belying the words, "and I certainly don't need to be escorted there!"

"I'm not taking any chances," Lupin said shortly, taking her arm and meeting her glare with one just as unyielding.

"Class, you can get a start on tonight's reading while I'm gone. We'll continue this session as soon as I've Obliviated you. I'm sure you'll understand the necessity."

He led McGonagall out and closed the door. The students stared at each other.

"Well," blurted Ron, breaking the stunned silence, "I guess now we know why she's so bloody strict!"