

# Brazen

*by kellychambliss*

Augusta Longbottom and Minerva McGonagall have known each other since their school days, but their relationship is more complicated than the world realises.

## 1

*Chapter 1 of 1*

Augusta Longbottom and Minerva McGonagall have known each other since their school days, but their relationship is more complicated than the world realises.

### **Brazen**

**By Kelly Chambliss**

~ \* ~ \* ~ \* ~

The edge of the window seat presses into Augusta Longbottom's thighs as she leans back on her elbows and spreads her legs wider than she has in years, wider than she ever did for Frank, and despite the chill air that is prickling her bare skin, she feels hot and almost . . .

Brazen.

It's the word Augusta's gran used all those years ago to describe Minerva McGonagall. Of course, Grannie had added "hussy" to it, but Augusta knew no one used that term any longer. In any case, it wasn't accurate.

Minerva wasn't a hussy: *everyone* had been kissing or being kissed in Diagon Alley that night, the night the wizarding world had learnt of the defeat of Grindelwald. But the first sight that had met Grannie's eyes as she stepped out of the Leaky had been Alastor Moody sweeping Minerva into a back-bending clinch, and Grannie had not been pleased.

The kiss hadn't meant anything ... Moody was just trying to get Min's goat, as usual ... but even if Grannie had known that, she wouldn't have cared. There were standards to be upheld, even on a night like that. *Especially* on a night like that. And one of those standards was that young ladies did not kiss young gentlemen in the road, no matter how many evil madwizards had been destroyed.

That's why Grannie had sniffed "brazen hussy" loud enough for Min to have heard ... if she hadn't been too busy kneeing Alastor in the goolies. Minerva always had a way with men.

But if she wasn't a hussy, she was brazen. Even in their schooldays.

*The silk slides over Augusta's eyes just like the breeze slides over her unaccustomed nakedness, and she is alone-but-not-alone in the sandalwood-scented darkness, breathless as the blindfold is tied behind her head and the shivery ends of it trail down her back. She waits for her lover's touch, her muscles clenching in the exquisite not-knowing of when or where . . .*

It was during their fifth year at Hogwarts when Augusta discovered that Minerva McGonagall fancied girls. She'd seen her: she'd actually seen Minerva kissing Elda Simpton on the Astronomy Tower after the lesson was over, and they'd contrived to be the last to leave.

Now, Augusta had seen girls kiss each other before. On the Hogwarts Express at the end of the year, the silly Hufflepuffs were always crying and pecking each other's cheeks and saying how much they'd miss everyone.

But Minerva wasn't kissing Elda in that sappy-girl way at all. Not at all. This kiss was long and serious. It was mouths together, not just lips on cheeks, and although the night was too dark for her to be sure, Augusta thought it involved tongues as well.

It was disgusting, and she'd told Minerva so later, in the Gryffindor common room. Min just looked at her ... brazenly, for all that she was standing there with her robes buttoned up just so and her prefect's badge pinned just right ... and observed that perhaps if Augusta spent as much time studying as she did spying, she wouldn't be in danger of failing her Charms OWL. As if a) it was any of Minerva's business, and b) Augusta wasn't doing just fine in dead-boring old Charms, thank you very much.

"At least I'm not a swot the way *some* people are," she'd retorted, eyeing Min pointedly. "But you'd better be careful, Minerva McGonagall. You keep on like this, and no boy will have you. You'll end up a shriveled old spinster."

*The touch, when it comes, is on her breasts, soft at first, and then strong fingers are kneading and rolling and pinching, lightly and then . . . oh, yes, so hard, and it doesn't matter how long it's been since the last time, the tingle is always the same. She feels her nipples tighten as she arches her back and her hips begin to move of their own accord . . .*

Augusta had warned Minerva that the boys wouldn't have her, but it turned out to be Minerva who wouldn't have the boys. Not that Alastor hadn't tried ... oh, he'd fancied Min something fierce. In the end, of course, he'd had to accept her as just a friend, but he always carried a bit of a torch for her. In the Auror office, anyone foolish enough to snicker about Minerva McGonagall in Moody's hearing was likely to find themselves looking at the business end of his wand. Frank wouldn't even tell Augusta what hex Alastor had used on Rufus Scrimgeour when he heard Rufus say that Minerva wouldn't be such a tight-arsed bitch if she just had a good man to fuck her.

As far as Augusta could tell, Min hadn't cared about any of it. She's simply lived her life as she'd seen fit, loving whom she pleased, without seeking anyone's approval. She'd been discreet ... of course she had: in the early days, it would have killed her career had her desires been widely known, and later . . . well, Minerva had always been self-contained and private, even in school. She never let much of herself escape from behind the armour of spectacles and sharp tongue. And it wasn't as if, even today, the wizarding world was all that tolerant of what Augusta's Grannie would have called perversion and what Augusta herself had once thought was just that.

They hadn't been friends in school, she and Min. Minerva was too damn bossy, for one thing, although when Augusta had said as much to Frank (it was their sixth year, and she'd just begun to go out with him), he'd just gaped at her. "*She's bossy?*" he'd said, and laughed far harder than Augusta had considered seemly. Still, Minerva had guts. She was tough. One had to admire that.

*Augusta's legs aren't as sturdy as they used to be, and she's trembling too much to remain almost-standing. But her arms are still strong, and she lifts herself onto the window seat, feeling cold glass against her shoulders and cool hands opening her thighs again, stroking them softly.*

*And then, finally, she feels the tip of a warm tongue between her legs. The delicious shock of it hits her like a Stunner and she thinks, to the extent that she can think, that it's a good thing she'd sat down, else she'd have fallen to the floor.*

In her young days, Augusta would have thought it was silly to want this so much; she would have seen her aching need as a sign of weakness, a lack of control. Sex was all well and good, she'd often said to Frank, but anything more than a kiss and a poke and maybe a quick cuddle was just self-indulgence. If Frank had ever tried to blindfold her in bed, she'd have slapped his hand away smartly and told him to mind what he was about, that he needed to concentrate on sticking his bits in where they belonged and not be monkeying with depravity and scarves.

But then Frank had died, and their son Frank Jr. and daughter-in-law Alice had been broken by Death Eaters, and a part of Augusta had broken with them.

Not that she'd ever let on. No, she'd lifted her head defiantly and topped it with a stuffed vulture to let the world know that no matter what happened, no matter who was destroyed, Augusta Longbottom would be there to pick up the remains. She'd worn her vulture proudly, and she had dared the world to laugh or sneer.

Yet inside she had died a little, and it had been Minerva, of all people, who had helped bring her back to life.

Min had been there at St Mungo's on that dreadful day that Augusta had signed the final commitment papers, officially consigning Frankie and Alice to their endless death-in-life on the insane ward. The Order had sent Min to be with her, no doubt thinking, in their usual thick way, that Augusta needed a woman's touch, and she'd surfaced from her misery long enough to be angry. She did *not* need any female foolishness, and she certainly didn't need Minerva "I-Always-Know-Best" McGonagall. She'd bluntly told Min so. "Go away," she'd said. "I don't want you here."

To Augusta's annoyance but not surprise ... when did Min ever listen to anyone, except maybe Albus Dumbledore? ... Minerva had ignored her and stayed.

Then, worse, she had insisted on coming home with her. Augusta had objected, of course. She'd told Minerva flatly to leave her alone and had turned her back and walked away. But it had done no good. The infuriating McGonagall had simply Apparated into the Longbottom kitchen, taken off her hat, and spelled the kettle hot.

Min had just been wandling a tot of brandy into the tea when the impossible happened, and Augusta, to her horror even at the time, had broken down.

It was the sight of Neville sleeping in his cot that had done it: his round, pitiful little face had seemed more real to her than it ever had before, and she had suddenly understood, fully and completely, that his very life was in no other hands but hers.

She felt tears start to her eyes, and she'd blinked them away angrily. This was no time to be coddling herself, or coddling Neville, either. She had to make him strong. She had to toughen him, so that he could stay safe. And he *would* be safe, she vowed. Oh, yes, he would. She'd see to it.

But when she'd taken out her wand to reinforce the protective charms around his cot, her hand had been trembling so much that she couldn't point it properly. She'd just stood there pointing, her wand arm shaking, tears sliding maddeningly down her face, until Minerva had come to lead her away.

Augusta tried to shake her off. "Stupid," she'd choked. "Don't know what's come over me . . . so weak . . ."

"Nonsense," Minerva said. She'd taken Augusta to the sofa, sat her down, held her, conjured a handkerchief, and mercifully hadn't tried to offer a single piece of advice. Her arms had been warm and unexpectedly comforting, and Augusta had finally let herself sob and surrender.

The kiss, when it came, seemed inevitable and right. Minerva tasted of tea and magic; Augusta had clutched her hungrily, wanting her to return the kiss, wanting it more than she could ever remember wanting anything.

But Minerva had pulled away. "No, Gus, stop," she'd whispered, and Augusta hadn't known she could speak so gently. "You don't want to do this; you'll be sorry."

"Don't tell me what I want!" Augusta shouted. All at once, she was furious. That's all she'd been hearing since Frankie and Alice had been found: people telling her, "No, you can't . . . they'll never . . . no chance . . . it's not possible . . ." She'd heard it from Order members, from healers, from Longbottoms near and far.

And she'd had enough.

"*You're* the one who doesn't want," she'd said, grabbing Min by the shoulders and barely resisting the temptation to give her a good shake. "*You* don't want to be the one to

tell me there's something else I can't have, not when I already can't have Frankie and Alice."

Minerva had looked at her for a long, appraising moment and then, slowly and deliberately, she had taken Augusta's face in her hands and kissed back.

*The tongue teases her folds, touching, then stopping; stroking deeply, then withdrawing altogether. Augusta growls in frustration as for an endless stretch of time, nothing happens. Every nerve she has is standing on end; her leg and stomach muscles twitch as she imagines that she feels the feathery brush of fingertips there . . . no, there . . . no . . .*

*She reaches toward the blindfold, but almost instantly finds her wrists pinned to the seat on either side of her, held down by firm hands. Then her body is covered by the warmth of another, naked breasts press against her own, a tongue lightly traces her lips, and she can taste the whisper of herself . . .*

She and Minerva had sex together only rarely after that first time: once after accidentally meeting again at St Mungo's, then once not long after Neville had been sorted in Gryffindor, then again a few days after the Triwizard Tournament and the Dark Lord's return. Each time had seemed unreal, as if it were somehow outside of life, but, despite Min's prediction, Augusta had never been sorry.

She never knew, and never asked, whether Minerva was involved with anyone else. What she had with Min wasn't about that. It wasn't about a relationship or the long term or even about liking each other, although Augusta grew to like Min more and more, except when Minerva annoyed her, which was often.

What they had was about comfort, about solace, about familiarity, about the past. It was about being with someone to whom she was Augusta and not just "Neville's gran."

The last-time-but-one that she'd seen Minerva, though, she'd been angry with her. It had started when she'd received an owl from Min: "Neville has always been an earnest student," McGonagall had written, "but he has no aptitude for Transfiguration. I have advised him to pursue a NEWT in Charms, a very useful discipline for which he has some skill . . ."

"A very useful discipline." *That* was rich. Trust Min to get a dig in. But she needn't think she was going to get the upper hand with Neville. No, indeed.

Augusta Apparated to the Hogwarts gates that very day. Once in Minerva's office, she slammed her red bag on the desk like the warning flag it was meant to be. No one ... *no one* ... was going to tell Augusta Longbottom what was best for her grandson. No matter how long they'd been teaching. Or what House they were the damned Head of.

"Augusta. What a pleasant surprise," Minerva said, smooth as a cushioning spell, as if she didn't know *exactly* why Augusta sat glowering in front of her. Then she'd had the gall to offer biscuits. "Ginger newt?"

Grannie had been right. Brazen. That was Minerva all over.

Oh, not that you'd know it to look at her, sitting there so properly behind her desk, Miss Butter-Wouldn't-Melt, with her teacher robes and her prim lips and that bloody "I'm a professor" bun that had been an exasperating affectation when she was young but that now ... and it served her right ... made her look older than Grannie ever had.

Augusta might have been gratified by this fact, except that she was old herself and never felt it more than when she looked at Neville, grown into the strong young man she'd always thought she wanted him to be and yet who now seemed almost a stranger to her.

"He's a fine lad, Gus," Minerva said unexpectedly ... and disarmingly, nudging the biscuit tin toward her. "A true Gryffindor. You needn't fear for him, you know."

"Hmph," Augusta had replied. "My only fear is that some old tabby will let him go soft." But she knew she didn't sound as gruff as she wanted to, and Minerva actually smiled.

Suddenly, she didn't look old at all.

*Augusta moves to deepen the kiss, but she's too late; her lover's mouth moves over her breasts and down her body to her open legs. With her eyes bound shut and her hands stilled and her thighs spread, Augusta feels free for the first time in years. She need do nothing ... she can do nothing ... but take the pleasure she is offered.*

*And it comes in long, steady tongue-strokes that add their wetness to Augusta's own, making her feel lush and slick and young. One of her wrists is released; she knows why when first one, then two, fingers slide easily into her. She can't stop her hips from bucking, and she tightens her knees around the other's head to hold her fast.*

*"Don't stop," she breathes, and it is both order and plea.*

After the Charms episode, she didn't see Minerva again for over a year. Augusta didn't attend Dumbledore's funeral ... she hated that sort of pomp ... and in the dark months that followed, she and Min both had enough to be getting on with; there was no time for sentimental visits.

Every day, it seemed, the news was worse. The wizarding world was at war ... again ... and hard experience had taught Augusta that it was best to keep her head down until she had reason to do otherwise. She went out only to the shops and to St Mungo's, and when she was on the ward, she took grim satisfaction in Alice's mindless half-smile and Frankie's empty eyes. They, at least, were safe, facing nothing worse than the welcome release of death.

Then one freezing night, not long after the Christmas of Neville's seventh year, she felt the tug at her cottage wards that signaled a visitor. There on the step, heavily cloaked, stood Minerva.

Wand in hand, Augusta slipped out the back door and crept through the garden to come up behind her.

"Nasty night for a drop-in," she barked.

Min turned, her own wand drawn, but she was less startled than Augusta had hoped.

"Constant vigilance," Min said. "I'm glad to see it."

The absence of the usual dry edge to her voice told Augusta more clearly than words just how difficult the war-year at Hogwarts must be. There were new, tired lines in Minerva's face, and she probably wanted to sit down. But Augusta was taking no chances.

"Where were we the night Frankie and Alice were committed?" she demanded.

Min's mouth quirked. "Naked in your bed," she replied. The dryness was back.

Augusta nodded. "Well, don't just stand there in the cold. Come inside."

In the sitting room, Min stood before the fire without removing her cloak. "I mustn't stay long," she said. "The staff are being watched. But They" ... and her tone left no doubt as to who "They" were ... "can't follow us every second."

"Why are you here? Is it Neville?" If he'd been taken, like Xenophilius's girl, Augusta wanted to know at once.

"Neville is fine," Min said quickly. "I'm here because I need to talk to you, and I didn't dare send an owl. It was actually safer to come in person ... I haven't spent forty years inside Hogwarts without learning a few tricks about getting out of it. And your Neville, I must say, has been learning a few tricks of his own. You should be proud of him, Gus; he's become quite the leader ... helping look after the younger students and showing the Death Eaters that we won't be cowed. But it's dangerous. They'll go after him

sooner or later."

"Protect him, then!" Augusta was implacable. "You're his Head of House. You owe him. You owe all of them."

Minerva's always-quick temper flared. "I'd give my life for them, Augusta Longbottom, and you know it," she snapped. "But I'm not so willing to give my life for *you*. And it's *you* I'm here about. Neville will be well-hidden when the time comes. But They will try to get at him by coming after you, I'm sure of it. I've been studying those damned Carrows and the rest; I know how they work. You need to be ready for Them."

Augusta opened her mouth to retort that she could look after herself, thank you, but thought better of it. The warning was wise. "I'll be ready," she answered quietly. "Thank you."

Minerva scrutinised her for a moment and then, satisfied, turned back to the fire and extended her hands to it.

Augusta drew a breath. Now that Minerva had voiced the dangers, Augusta could allow herself a moment of fear. For Neville above all, but for Min, too. For all of them. Even for herself.

But then, with a glance at her vulture hat on its peg, she put such thoughts aside. If They came for her, she'd be waiting. In the meantime, she had better things to do.

Stepping behind Minerva, she reached for the fastening of her cloak. "You're the clever one, or so you've always claimed," she whispered, her lips against Min's ear. "You can come up with some excuse for skiving off for an hour or two." She kissed Min's neck as she slid the cloak off the thin shoulders.

*Augusta is digging the nails of one hand into those shoulders now; her other hand she winds into Minerva's unbound hair as she moves to the rhythm Min has set, pushing back danger and darkness with each thrust. The cold burn of the diamond windowpanes on her back joins the hot bite of Minerva's mouth and fingers, and then Augusta is coming, clenching, pulsing, shouting her release into the little room.*

*An eternity later, when her bones have returned to her body, she removes her blindfold and smiles as she cups Minerva's softly-flushed cheek.*

*"Brazen," she says.*