

Another Part of the Castle (1996)

by Squibstress

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Chapter 1 of 1

Harry has a dream and makes a startling discovery.

He feels the familiar rage build behind his eyes until it explodes from every pore, engulfing the walls of the room in flame.

"So you have chosen! Nevertheless, you will dance to my tune!" he hisses, extending his wand arm toward a smoke-obscured figure. "Crucio!"

He is rewarded with a high-pitched scream.

Wonderful!

He feels the power coursing through him now and craves more. As he continues to hold the curse, the voice cuts off abruptly, gulps for air, then sends another series of screams reverberating through the sooty air. The sound fills him and brings the rage into focus and control. As the screams ebb to a whimper and then redouble, he can almost taste her pain, and it is sweet, so sweet. He inhales deeply, unmindful of the smoke.

Wonderful!

It is...

Terrible. Horror eclipses the heady sense of power that had filled him only moments ago as he realises that he recognises the voice of the screaming woman. An awful knowledge cuts through the fog like a scalpel and...

Harry wrenched himself forcefully from sleep.

Professor McGonagall!

He leapt from the chair, sending the copy of *Fifty Quidditch Plays They Won't Be Expecting* he had been reading before he dozed off hurtling from his lap, practically dove through the portrait hole and ran through the empty corridor with a single thought: *Find Professor McGonagall . . . find Professor McGonagall . . .*

He arrived at the door to her chambers and pounded on it, calling, "Professor! Professor! It's Harry! Are you there? Please answer!" He waited a moment, then, not hearing movement from within, repeated his urgent call. When she still didn't answer, Harry paused to think for the first time since waking.

What now?

It was Saturday afternoon and the castle was nearly deserted. Most of the older students were in Hogsmeade, and the rare warmth of the late October day had beckoned the younger ones out onto the grounds. Professor McGonagall could be anywhere: her classroom, the library, the staff room, Hogsmeade . . . or she could be captive in a smoke-filled room being tortured by a madman.

Should he fetch Professor Dumbledore? Since Sirius' death last year and the events that led to it, Harry had endured no more visions...if that's what they could be called...of Voldemort. Much as he didn't want to fall into another trap (or to admit to Dumbledore that he had made no progress at Occlumency), he had to make sure Professor McGonagall was safe.

Making a decision, he dashed down the stairs, not stopping to apologise to Nearly Headless Nick as he sprinted right through the Gryffindor House ghost.

"I say, Harry! Just because I'm ex-corporeal . . ." an affronted Sir Nicholas called after him.

Arriving, panting, at the entrance to the Headmaster's office, Harry paused to wipe the sweat from his brow.

"Password?" enquired the gargoyle guarding the door.

"I don't know it," Harry replied quickly. "Could you please just..."

"Password?" the creature repeated implacably.

"Look, it's an emergency . . . can you at least tell me if he's in there?" Harry pleaded with the statue.

"The Headmaster is in his private chambers and not to be disturbed," the creature reported.

Harry sighed in frustration, then began pounding on the outer door and shouting, "Professor, please! It's Harry! I have to see you, it's an emergency!"

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"Albus, wait . . . do you hear something?"

"Only the beating of my heart, my angel," murmured the elderly wizard with his lips pressed against his wife's neck.

"No, really, I'm serious; it sounds as if someone's out there," she insisted.

Albus craned his neck to look questioningly into her face, then he, too heard the faint thumping.

He rose from the bed and strode quickly to the bathroom to retrieve a plush, purple dressing gown from its hook. Slipping it on, he went to the door, opened it a few inches, and peered out into the sitting room.

"There's nobody. If it were one of the staff or an Order member, they would have Floo-ed into the study, and Fawkes would have alerted me."

The sound recommenced, and this time they both heard a faint voice echoing in the distance.

"I'll only be a few moments, love," Albus said as he stepped into the adjoining room. Before quietly closing the door behind him, he added with a grin, "Don't even *think* of leaving that bed."

Minerva sighed. The last time he'd said something like that, she hadn't seen him again for nearly eight hours. She tried to be sanguine about the annoyances of being married to the Headmaster of Hogwarts...to say nothing of the leader of the Order of the Phoenix...but this was the first time in weeks they had been able to steal a few precious hours alone as husband and wife.

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Harry was about to give up and try to rouse another staff member (*Please, sweet Nimue, tell me Snape isn't the only one on duty today* he silently prayed), when he heard the huge stone walls rumble open to reveal the Headmaster.

"Harry, my boy, what brings you here? Shouldn't you be in Hogsmeade with Mr Weasley and Miss Granger?" Dumbledore enquired pleasantly.

"It's about Professor McGonagall . . . at . . . at least I think . . . well, it might be," Harry stammered.

Dumbledore paused to consider for a moment. The boy looked genuinely troubled.

"Please, do come in, Harry," he said.

Harry followed the Headmaster up the spiral stairs and into the study.

"Now, what is troubling you about Professor McGonagall?"

"She might be in danger. I was . . . I saw . . . I had another vision. Of Voldemort. He had Professor McGonagall, and he was . . . he was torturing her."

"I see," said Dumbledore calmly. "When did you have this vision, Harry?"

"Just now. I was reading and I guess I fell asleep, and then it happened," Harry answered.

Professor Dumbledore peered at him for a long moment. Harry began to get uncomfortable.

"Please, sir, do you know where she is?"

"You may rest assured, Harry, that Professor McGonagall is quite safe," Dumbledore said.

A sigh of relief escaped Harry. "So it was another trap," he said.

"Oh, I doubt it," replied the Headmaster. "Voldemort underestimates you in many ways, but even he must realise that you wouldn't fall for the same ruse twice. Most likely, you connected with him in a dream state. You were simply a . . . guest . . . in the nightmare of a lunatic."

"Oh," said Harry weakly.

Dumbledore smiled comfortingly at him. "You did the right thing, Harry, coming directly to me. I'm happy to be able to reassure you. Now, if there's nothing more..."

"But how can you be *sure*?" blurted Harry. "Shouldn't we check on her or something?"

Dumbledore tried not to sigh audibly. Clearly Harry would worry until he had seen his Transfiguration professor for himself.

"Will you step into my sitting room for a moment, please?" asked Dumbledore, crossing the large office to a bookshelf opposite. Harry was startled when the bookshelf disappeared to reveal a mahogany door, which the Headmaster held open for him.

Harry was apprehensive. Had he offended the Headmaster with his doubts? He stepped into the room with trepidation.

"Wait here a moment, if you would, Harry," said the old man as he walked across the room, opened a door opposite and spoke something quietly into the adjoining chamber. He closed the door again and walked back to face Harry, saying nothing, but smiling beatifically.

It wasn't until that moment that Harry stopped to wonder why the Headmaster was wearing a dressing gown in the middle of a Saturday afternoon.

After a few moments...during which Harry nervously stared at the dirt under his fingernails...the door opened, and Harry's heart skipped a beat.

Professor McGonagall stepped into the room and strode over to stand next to the Headmaster.

"As you can see, Mr Potter, I am perfectly well," she said. "Thank you for your concern. Now are there any other questions?" she asked.

"No . . . um, that's great . . . I mean, that you're safe and all," yammered Harry as he absorbed the astonishing sight of his prim Transfiguration professor wearing a knee-length green silk dressing gown and, it appeared, nothing else. As his eyes darted to her salt and pepper hair, which was decidedly dishevelled, understanding dawned.

Minerva had to stifle a most unMcGonagall-like giggle when she saw the blush creeping up from Harry's collar to stain his cheeks with proof of his embarrassment.

Albus glanced at his wife then turned his attention back to his mortified student.

"Do you need to sit down, Harry?" he prodded gently.

The young man snapped out of his stupor and answered, "No, thanks, Professor. I'm okay . . . I'm just surprised, is all. I didn't realize you two were . . ." he trailed off, not knowing exactly how to finish his thought, and flushed crimson once again.

"It's quite all right, Harry. You see, Minerva is my wife."

"You're married? Wow, that's great," said Harry, with genuine pleasure. "When did..."

"Thirty-nine years this Christmas," replied Dumbledore, snaking an arm around his wife's waist.

Harry said, "I didn't realise . . ."

"Very few people do," said Dumbledore. "It's safer for both of us, and we prefer to keep our relationship professional during the school term."

"For the most part," said McGonagall, with only the hint of a smile in her voice. As Harry seemed rooted to the spot by acute embarrassment, she added, "If there's nothing else, Mr Potter, Professor Dumbledore and I should like to continue with our pedagogic exercises."

Albus knew that, true to her Animagus alter-ego, she liked to toy with her prey before eviscerating it, and decided to take pity on the boy. "Come, Harry, I'll see you to the door," he said, giving Harry a subtle nudge in the correct direction.

Once the stone door was shut behind Harry, Albus returned to his wife, chuckling. "That was a bit cruel, Minerva. The boy was already mortified."

"Well, it was either that or a slap in the face to pull him out of his shock," she answered.

Taking her hand and leading her back toward their bedroom, Albus said, "I trust you will show me a bit more kindness than you did Harry."

"On the contrary, Albus, I intend to show you no mercy," she answered.

Albus gulped and quickened his step.

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"Blimey, I'm starving!" exclaimed Ron as he plopped down next to Harry at the Gryffindor table.

"I don't know how you could be hungry after all the sweets you ate at Honeydukes," tutted Hermione, settling herself across the table from the boys. "How was your detention, Harry? Was Snape beastly to you?" she asked sympathetically.

"It was postponed," answered Harry. "Some second-year sprouted horns and a tail and kept shouting, 'I curse you in the name of Circe's saggy tits' at everyone, so Snape had to help Madam Pomfrey sort him out."

"Well that's good, isn't it?" said Ron, dribbling pumpkin juice down his chin and wiping it with his sleeve. "What did you do all afternoon?"

Before Harry could answer, he saw Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall enter the Great Hall. He couldn't help watching them, mouth open, as they took their seats at the High Table. As he stared, McGonagall caught sight of him and fixed him with one of her sternest looks. Then she winked.

"Did I just see that?" exclaimed a flabbergasted Hermione, who had followed Harry's gaze to the High Table.

"See what?" asked Ron between bites of bread.

"What's going on?" Hermione asked, narrowing her eyes at Harry.

"I'll tell you later," he mumbled, dropping his gaze to focus his attention on the wonders of his soup.

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"*Married?*" squealed Hermione as the three teens sat huddled in a corner of the Gryffindor common room.

Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnegan looked up from their Gobstones.

"Yeah, but keep it down, will you?" answered Harry quickly. "Dumbledore said they keep it quiet, but they've been together for thirty-nine years."

Hermione leaned forward in her chair and whispered, "And you think they were really..."

"...making love?"

"...having it off?" finished Hermione and Ron simultaneously.

Harry chuckled as Hermione threw Ron an annoyed look. "I'm pretty sure," he said.

"Ugh! That's just disgusting!" Ron exclaimed.

"I think it's sweet," Hermione said. "They're still in love after thirty-nine years."

"Yeah, but, 'Mione, think about how *old* they are. Ugh!" Ron shuddered again.

"Ronald Weasley, you never cease to amaze me," Hermione sighed.

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"Albus Dumbledore, you never cease to amaze me," Minerva sighed.

Her husband popped his head up from between her legs and smiled.

~FIN~