

Postscript

by Squibstress

Headmaster and Mrs Longbottom stumble on the late Minerva McGonagall's diary.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note:Written for this year's [Samhain Smut Fest](#) on LiveJournal. Prompt: There's a witches-only club in London that has a special Halloween party every year. On the year after Voldemort falls, McGonagall finally lets herself invite someone to attend with her.

□

31 October 2022

Deputy Headmaster Longbottom...as he still thought of himself...paused to conjure a handkerchief, which he used to dab at his eyes. He noted with a sad smile that he had given it the tartan pattern he had always associated with her.

*Five points to Gryffindor for style!*her voice seemed to echo in his head.

As he stood just inside the doorway to the late Headmistress' quarters, he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"You could have had the house-elves do this, you know," said Hannah.

He put his hand atop hers and said, "I know. It just seems right to do it this way . . . sort of my personal farewell, if you know what I mean."

"I think that's a nice way to look at it," she replied. "Shall I help you, love?"

He nodded. "If you like."

They began placing items in the boxes, working together in silent efficiency.

Headmistress McGonagall's taste had run to the spartan, so it didn't take long to clear out her sitting room and study. Neville was glad he didn't have to clean out her office. That remained much as she had left it, although he had (reluctantly) occupied it more than a week ago, three days after the Headmistress had died after a sudden illness. She had had few personal items in the office, and the various books, doodads, and instruments that festooned the shelves and tables traditionally passed with the office to its next holder.

Me!

Neville still couldn't quite believe he was now (provisional) Headmaster of the school. Hannah had laughed at his shock when he described for her the emergency governors' meeting at which he had swiftly and unanimously been confirmed in the post, subject to a successful contract negotiation and a six-month review, of course.

Nevertheless, it felt wrong to him to be moving her things from her personal quarters, and he suspected it would feel even more wrong to move his and Hannah's in.

His wife's soft voice interrupted his thoughts. "Shall we?" she asked, gesturing to the bedroom.

He felt uneasy as he moved through the door into the bedroom. He had been in her sitting room many times, but in the fourteen years he had been her colleague, he had never had occasion to enter her bedroom, and it felt odd to be doing so now, with his wife. He was afraid he would never be able to sleep in this room, but of course, that was just foolishness of the sort that Minerva McGonagall would have gently chided him for, much as she had when he had taken more than three months after joining the staff to finally call her "Minerva".

The room was a perfect reflection of the Minerva McGonagall Neville had known and alternately feared and loved. It was sparsely but tastefully furnished and neat as the first pin Neville had finally managed to Transfigure into a matchstick under her patient and encouraging eye all those years ago. As in the woman herself, warmth and humour was hinted at rather than boldly proclaimed, suggested by the very few photographs on the dresser and a hand-knitted afghan depicting the silver tabby cat that had been Minerva's Animagus form neatly folded at the foot of the bed...a gift from Hermione Granger, Neville thought.

As Hannah neatly removed the clothes from the dresser...and Neville was thankful for that; he didn't think he could have managed to touch something so personal as her nightclothes or underthings...Neville moved to the large wardrobe at the other end of the room. From it, he reverently removed three teaching robes (two green, one black), several black, high-necked dresses with long sleeves, one set of rather fusty fancy dress robes, and a simple, navy-blue Muggle dress with matching jacket he had never seen her wear. There were also two cloaks: one light muslin travelling cloak and a heavier wool one to fend off the harsh Scottish winters.

After he had removed these and put them in one of the trunks, he surveyed the wardrobe a last time to ensure it was empty. He was about to turn away when he caught a shimmer just out of the corner of his eye.

It seemed to be coming from the shelf at the top of the wardrobe. When he looked, there appeared to be nothing there, but the shimmer...just a tiny skip in the seam of reality...was just perceptible. He closed his eyes and focussed: yes, he could sense the slight residue of magic here. He reached up to the shelf and felt a slightly warm sensation as his hand passed through the perimeter of the charm. After groping around for a moment, he felt a square object but couldn't grasp it. He probed it for a few moments, then drew his wand.

"*Accio* box!"

A rectangular box, about twenty-four by sixteen by six inches, flew out of the wardrobe and into his hands.

"What's that, Nev?" Hannah enquired, coming to look over his shoulder.

"I don't know. It was at the top of the wardrobe, behind an old Obscuring Charm."

He gave it a slight shake, and the sound indicated there were items inside the box.

He paused for a moment.

"Aren't you going to open it?"

"I don't know, Hannah. If she put it behind an Obscuring Charm, doesn't that mean she didn't want anyone to find it?"

"Maybe. Probably. But she's gone now," Hannah said gently.

"Yes, but what if it's something dangerous?"

"Nev, do you really think Headmistress McGonagall would have kept something truly dangerous in her wardrobe?"

"I suppose not. But it's likely something personal that she didn't want others to see."

"Well, now you've got me intrigued! What kind of secrets do you think Minerva McGonagall could have been hiding?"

"I don't know, Hannah. And frankly, I'm not sure I want to know."

Neville knew that there was more to Minerva McGonagall than Ginger Newts and tartan plaid. Neville sensed it, though warm as it had been, their friendship could not have been described as especially intimate. But common sense also told him that a witch of Minerva's intelligence and power...not to mention her age...likely had a Past. He wasn't at all sure he wanted to delve into it. She had...they all had...lived through difficult times, and anything she had done to survive them and take what comfort she could was nothing Neville needed to know about.

In the end, Hannah came up with the idea to keep the box and wait for the late Headmistress' portrait to awaken.

Six months later, Neville was startled by her voice behind him, calling, "Headmaster Longbottom! You look right at home behind that desk. I couldn't be more pleased!"

After a few days, he worked up the courage to ask her about the box.

"I don't know, Neville," the portrait said blankly. "I have no memory of it. As you know, we portraits only contain an imprint of living memory. There's a great deal left out. Neither of you knows anything about it, do you?" she enquired of the portraits of Dumbledore and Snape that flanked her on either side, her painted eyes narrowing slightly.

They responded in the negative.

"I think, Neville, that you may open the box. I cannot imagine there is anything within that could harm anyone at this late date, and certainly not me."

He hesitated, and she added, "If you feel you need my permission, consider it posthumously granted. Frankly, I'm rather curious."

That night, Neville sat with Hannah on their bed in what he still thought of as their new quarters, the box resting on his thighs.

"Well, what do you think? Shall I open it?" he asked.

"She told you to."

Just as his hand met the clasp on the side of the box, Hannah cried, "Wait, Nev!"

He paused, looking at his wife questioningly.

"What if there are protective charms on it? You could get hurt."

"Not likely. Most protective charms lose their potency when the caster dies. And anyway, I doubt Minerva would have used a charm that could actually harm anyone." He kissed her nose lightly and said, "Try not to worry, Hannah."

She surprised him by stroking his balding head, saying, "Can't help it. You always were too brave by half, Headmaster Longbottom."

He smiled and unlatched the box. Inside, there was a sheaf of letters, a worn photograph, and a leather-bound book with a blank cover. Taking out the photo, he peered at it for a few seconds before handing it to Hannah.

"Look at this."

Hannah took the photo. "Is that . . . Madam Hooch?"

"I think so. When do you reckon it was taken?"

"I don't know. A long time ago. Before she taught here, certainly."

The photo showed a smiling young woman holding a broom and wearing red-and-white Quidditch robes with British flag patches at the shoulders. Her hair was soft brown and chin-length, but her eyes were unmistakable. It was Rolanda Hooch.

"Why would Minerva keep an old photo of Madam Hooch?" Hannah asked.

Neville could think of only one reason, and said so.

"You really think they were lovers?" Hannah asked.

"I don't know. Minerva certainly never mentioned it if they were, but then she wouldn't, would she?"

"The answer is probably in these letters," said Hannah, reaching for the bundle, but Neville put his hand out to stop her.

"Don't, Hannah. At least . . . not yet."

She peered at him for a moment then put the letters down. "All right. What about the book, though?"

"We'll have a look at that, all right?" said Neville. As he opened it, a whisper of magic shivered through his hands, and he knew that there had indeed been a protective charm on the book, but that it had faded when its caster passed through the Veil.

He opened it to the first page and began to read.

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4 October 1973

I appear to have bought myself a birthday present.

I really have no idea what I am doing with a diary, as I have never before felt the need to create a record of my thoughts; however, lately something has compelled me to examine certain events in my life, and as I have no Pensieve, I shall have to commit my observations to parchment.

My CV, to begin with:

I am now 48 years of age and feel every moment of it.

I have authored or co-authored twenty papers, made eighteen invited presentations, mentored two post-doctoral students and one (failed) Animagus student.

I have taught an estimated 680 students how to Transfigure a hedgehog into a pincushion.

I have buried two parents, one brother, three close friends, and countless friendly acquaintances.

I have had seven lovers.

I have been in love twice.

I have been pregnant once.

I have killed two people.

I have been cloistered...that feels like the correct word...at this school for 16 years, ten months, and three days.

I have lately felt that life hasn't much more to offer me, nor I it. It is easy to tell myself that this is why I have done something so utterly foolish as to have accepted an invitation I had no business entertaining in the first place.

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Neville let the diary come to rest on his knees. Hannah just stared at him, eyes wide with astonishment.

"Hannah, I don't think we should continue . . ."

"Are you kidding, Nev? You can't stop now...I'd die of curiosity. Besides, she said you could."

"No, Hannah; she only said I could open the box. She didn't know there was a diary inside it."

Hannah asked, "Who are you protecting, Neville? Minerva, or your memories of her?"

"I don't know, Hannah. The latter, I suppose."

"I don't know about you, but I think I'd like to know the truth about her, about who she was, what she thought. I think she'd say the same."

"Maybe," sighed Neville. After a moment, he opened the book and continued to read the next entry.

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31 October 1973

The first thing Minerva noticed when she stepped into the bustling room was how much it resembled a Ministry function.

There were people clumped in small groups, some around the food table, some at the bar, a few in corners, and one or two standing uncomfortably apart from the others, trying to maintain an air of aloofness. There was music playing...something Minerva didn't recognise...and combined with mixed conversation punctuated by the occasional

eruption of laughter, it gave the room an undercurrent of animation, as if the space itself were alive. A sense of anticipation mixed with anxiety pervaded the atmosphere.

The difference was the clothing. It was All-Hallows' Eve, so the masks were to be expected, of course, but Minerva had never been to a Halloween ball or party at which the attendees were collectively wearing so little. Some were nearly nude, while others were wearing robes that left something to the imagination...a little something. There was quite a bit of leather, Minerva saw, and she could hear it scrunching and squeaking along as people moved past her. One wizard was in nothing but a set of leather chaps and a pair of nipple clamps with a chain jingling merrily between them as he laughed at something his friend had said.

The corsets caught her eye. Many witches of varying shapes and sizes had apparently poured themselves into these Victorian garments; some with abundant breasts spilling tantalisingly over the top edges, others whose breasts were fully covered by a chemise or other undergarment, and a few whose breasts were unbound and bare, propped up from underneath by the bones of the corset. There were simple cloth corsets with laces or hooks; there were complicated-looking ones, with straps and holes and attachments; there were leather ones, satin ones, plastic ones...even one that appeared to be made entirely of dragon-hide. (That *cost a few Galleons*, Minerva thought with a reflexive shudder of Scottish disapproval.)

"See something that interests you?" asked a voice from behind her, and Minerva turned to see Amelia's slightly crooked smile and her amused blue eyes blinking at her with put-upon innocence.

Minerva's mouth had gone a bit dry, so she took a moment to moisten her lips with her tongue before answering.

"Yes, as a matter of fact."

"The corsets," said Amelia. "I thought you might like those."

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"Well, what does it say?" Hannah asked, scooting closer to her husband to peer over his shoulder at the journal.

"I don't know," said Neville, resting the small volume on his knees, frowning slightly. "It's all nonsense."

"What do you mean," Hannah asked.

"Here, look for yourself," he said, handing her the book.

The entry was, indeed, nonsense. Although when he looked at it again after Hannah handed it back, he thought he could discern some pattern to it. An Arithmancer could probably suss it out, he thought, but it would be quite beyond his own meagre talents in that area.

"I think it's some kind of code," he said.

"Why would she put her diary in code? And why wouldn't the charm fade after her death?" asked Hannah.

"I don't know," he answered.

"Look through the rest; maybe there's more that's not in code," she urged him.

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25 December 1973

Minerva was surprised to get the invitation to join Druantia's Grotto. After her first visit on Samhain, Amelia had told her that the club only issued a few invitations each year and only after the Halloween party that was the sole opportunity for club members to invite guests. Each member could bring one guest, and only for that one evening. Amelia had received her invitation to join only after her third Halloween visit to the club with a former lover who was a member.

Minerva had wondered if that lover were there in the shadows that night, watching as Amelia knelt between Minerva's quivering thighs, her tongue snaking into Minerva's every crevice, teasing every fold with its probing tip and warm, wet blade, but when it had finally slithered across her swollen, aching clitoris, Minerva had forgotten about the lover, and the audience in general, as the pleasure of Amelia's particular attention engulfed her.

She had been nervous, but gods! Once she had watched a few scenarios in the playroom, a little public cunnilingus between friends seemed positively quaint, so she hadn't objected when Amelia gently pulled her down to sit on a leather-bound club chair, knelt in front of her and began running her hands up under Minerva's gown, eventually moving her legs over the arms of the chair so that Minerva was spread-eagled in front of not only her lover, but the small group of witches and wizards who had gathered to watch the "new girl" pop her Grotto cherry. And of course, she had been very, very aroused.

When she had come to her senses after that first time, she nervously searched the faces around her for anyone familiar. Most...though not all...participants wore glamours, Amelia had told her, but most people's glamours didn't hold up under close scrutiny. Minerva was glad, not for the last time, for her particular skills in Transfiguration. There was little chance anyone would recognise Hogwarts' stern Transfiguration mistress and respectable Head of Gryffindor House in the woman who had been writhing and crying out under the hands and tongue of her very proper "close friend" from the Ministry.

She was also glad for the charms Amelia had told her about...and about which she had read in the contract she had been required to sign upon entry to the club...that helped preserve secrecy and the privacy of the club's members. It was a rather ingenious twist on the Fidelius Charm, Minerva thought, that allowed each member of the club to be, in essence, a limited-licence Secret-Keeper: one who could neither reveal the name nor the location of Druantia's Grotto, except to the one allotted yearly guest, nor the names of anyone he or she might encounter there. Minerva had known only the nature of the club when Amelia had tentatively brought up the notion of her coming to the annual party, and now she herself would be unable to reveal anything more about it to another person.

Now that she would be a member...and Minerva had no doubt that she was going to accept the invitation...she could invite a guest for the Halloween party. Her mind turned immediately to Rolanda, and she used her formidable will to push the thought from her mind.

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"Here's something," said Neville, stopping on a page that didn't bear the strange hieroglyphics that had graced the first thirty or so pages of the journal.

He read:

21 November 1973

God damn Albus Dumbledore.

And I write that with all due respect and deep affection.

But god damn Albus Dumbledore.

He didn't know...couldn't have known...when he told me whom he had hired to replace our fallen flying instructor and Quidditch coach.

But of course, he did know, because he always knows things he shouldn't. Just because a wizard plays his cards close to his chest, it doesn't mean he holds no aces. I, of

all people, should know that.

The way he looked at me when he said her name told me he knew, and what's more, he knew that, too.

I wonder what he's up to?

Surely Rolanda Hooch isn't the only former Quidditch star (and only my good nature prevents me from adding "minor" to that epithet) he could have found to teach eleven-year-olds to push off gently and hold steady in a strong wind.

But I shall have to make the best of it, shan't I? That's what I do, after all. I make the best of things: my students; my career; my private life...it's all been a matter of making the best of what I have to work with.

And now I have to work with her.

I wonder how I shall manage?

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Hannah's eyes were large as she looked at Neville. "I wonder how she'd manage?"

"I don't know, but she did. Madam Hooch worked here for thirty years, so I suppose they worked out . . . whatever it was," said Neville.

"Keep reading," said Hannah.

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30 April 1974

Minerva hadn't intended to come this weekend, *and no pun intended*, she thought to herself. Amelia was out of town, and she didn't think she was quite ready to venture into a club gathering without Amelia.

They had been to two club parties since that first one, and although Minerva had declined to take part in any of the private scenarios offered her, she had been a somewhat more active participant in the public playroom, albeit only with Amelia and one other witch. The three of them together had had rather a good time, Minerva thought. Six hands, three tongues and one ridiculously large strap-on dildo was a kind of magic they didn't teach at Hogwarts.

Whatever inhibitions Minerva had were slowly dissolving in the dizzying atmosphere of the club. She had entertained many fantasies in the past, of course, but had never thought she would have the inclination, much less the opportunity, to act on any of them.

She was not ashamed of these fantasies...Minerva McGonagall was not a woman given to shame...but she had always thought them a private pleasure. Now, she found, there was greater pleasure to be had in the sharing.

It was a reasonable substitute for intimacy, she thought. She and Amelia, though happy with one another and warmly companionable, were not especially intimate, despite their mutual sexual appetites. They both accepted the limitations of their relationship...welcomed them, in fact...but Minerva had to admit, it was easy to reach the limits of enchantment with a lover whom one did not precisely love.

She had found herself restless this weekend, and not especially inclined to remain around the school on her weekend off. Especially not after that morning's Quidditch final. Gryffindor had lost badly to Slytherin...her House team was pants and had been since her niece had graduated and joined the Harpies three years ago, Minerva thought grimly. Rolanda, who was remarkably unobtrusive for a Slytherin in Minerva's estimation, had put a collegial hand on Minerva's arm, saying, "It's a shame we couldn't have a flutter on the game. Lucky thing for you I'm the ref, then, isn't it?" Minerva had only said, "Indeed," but Rolanda had continued, saying brightly, "I'm meeting some friends at the Hog's Head for a little celebration. Care to come along?"

Minerva had demurred tersely but politely. The memory of Rolanda's celebrations past still brought an ache to Minerva's chest, and later, back in her quarters, she had felt the walls of the castle closing in on her as she tried not to think about it.

She circled the salon of the club with a leery eye and ended up at the bar, ordering a club soda with lime to fortify her.

The bubbles were a mistake, she discovered, as she felt them working their prickly way through her belly and shortly thereafter attempting to squeeze through the tiny passage allowed by Minerva's corset. Hers was not the tightest lacing around, but it would do, and she had to excuse herself to the loo, hoping that nobody would come in as she let out a loud belch.

When she emerged, she wandered into the public playroom, eventually settling in a corner where several others were watching a pair of wizards lavishing attention on a third, who was blindfolded and strung up by the arms to a metal bar floating in the air. His feet were bound together, and one of the wizards had his mouth on the man's cock while the other beat his arse with a leather flogger, admonishing him between strokes not to come without permission. Minerva quickly saw the difficulty of the bound wizard's dilemma. If he so much as flinched when the flogger hit him, his cock would move in the other wizard's mouth, increasing his stimulation.

Minerva was wondering what the wizard's punishment would be if he came before he was allowed when she felt a gentle tap on the shoulder. She turned to see a wizard, of medium height and build and the undistinguished features that were the hallmark of a weak glamour, standing behind her.

"I wonder if you'd be interested in a similar scenario...a private one? With that lovely witch?" he asked, gesturing subtly to a petite redhead in a leather corset and high boots who was standing opposite them. The witch noticed them looking, and gave a small smile and nod at Minerva.

Minerva was taken aback. She had been approached by several members, men and women, before about private scenarios, and while she had always declined, she was intrigued. Amelia had explained a little about the scenarios...how they worked, rules and etiquette...and had described some of those she had taken part in. It had made Minerva wet, even though she didn't...she had thought...fancy the kind of role-playing that apparently took place in those private rooms.

The wizard seemed to notice her hesitation, and he drew her away from the group. "You seem to enjoy watching them," he said, indicating the trio of wizards, "so I thought you might like to join us. I apologise if I have misjudged . . . no offense was intended."

"No, no," said Minerva, thinking that he must think her an odd duck indeed if she would be offended by such a suggestion in such a place, "it's an interesting offer. It's just that I'm not experienced in that kind of play," she said.

"If it interests you, Alessandra"...he indicated the redhead..."would like to teach you. You would not, of course, be required to do anything that makes you uncomfortable."

"All right." It was out before Minerva could think about it.

"Excellent," said the wizard, and led Minerva to where Alessandra stood. "Our new friend . . ." he said turning to Minerva with an inquiring look.

"Miranda," said Minerva.

"Miranda has agreed to join us."

"Wonderful," said Alessandra. "Would either of you like something to drink before we find a room?"

The trio stopped by the bar for some water...still for Minerva this time...and Alessandra flagged down a club official to see about a room and get the appropriate paperwork.

The official showed them to a long corridor and stopped in front of a door. Minerva felt only a slight frisson of unease when she saw the title on the door: "Montrose Magpies."

She must have worn a look of surprise, because the official said with a chuckle, "Quidditch team. All the rooms are named after 'em. We've got Puddlemere United, Holyhead Harpies, Chudley Cannons, Winbourne Wasps The club founder liked Quidditch," he explained.

"Evidently," was all Minerva said.

They each signed a short, standard club agreement then agreed on a safe word.

The door swung open and the trio entered.

There in that room, Minerva began to learn the fine art of flogging from Mistress Alessandra, who was, apparently, very, very good at it. She had many other esoteric skills that were much in demand at Druantia's Grotto, and, no doubt, elsewhere, and these she passed on to her eager pupil, Miranda, over the following two years.

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1 January 1980

I am a fool.

If I were my own student, I'd be doing lines by now.

I am a fool, I am a fool, I am a fool. I am a fool. I am a fool . . .

I should not drink. And if I drink, I should not allow certain people into my quarters after midnight. Not even if they bring single-malt whisky and claim to be first-footing.

I fear you will despair of me, dear diary, when I tell you that I spent the night with her.

It is easy, of course, to blame the Firewhisky, but you and I both know that's only part of the story. The rest of it is that I am still utterly enthralled by her, and I wanted it. Which she knew, and which she took advantage of. Of which she took advantage, I should say.

Or did she? It is, I admit, a bit hard to tell who had the advantage. I am her superior, after all, and older, and I have a reputation for wisdom. [Imagine rueful laughter here, diary.]

She didn't understand when I shooed her out early this morning, and what could I tell her?

What did I tell her?

That it was wrong, we are colleagues, I am the Deputy Headmistress, there is a war brewing and I am in the middle of it.

But of course, those are not reasons, just excuses.

The reason is that I am afraid. Afraid of what she will do to me, again.

Merlin help me, I have become a boring cliché: a spinster guarding herself against heartache with starchy uprightness and selfless devotion to duty. I hated it when I read it in all those Victorian novels I was forced to read as a girl, and I find I hate it even more now.

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24 February 1980

Amelia and Minerva arrived together but quickly parted ways once they got inside. They were friends without benefits now, and for a long time before, but still liked to spend their Friday evenings in chess and conversation before donning their special attire, applying their glammers, and heading off for an evening of pleasant, but separate, diversions.

Minerva quickly found herself in the public playroom with Alessandra and another witch. They had become quite popular, both singly and together, and Minerva could usually count on an evening of choice and varied pleasures. She had found she enjoyed being on both the giving and receiving end of a flogger or leather crop...she drew the line at the cat-o-nine tails...and this evening she was bent across the flogging bench, legs spread, as the younger witch attended to Minerva's backside under the watchful eye of Madam Alessandra.

She was bound this time, wrists tied behind her back, and the flogger was doing its work, but the strokes were uneven in rhythm and of varying degrees of strength. It was frustrating, not being able to anticipate where the next blow would fall. After seven, there was a pause. Then she heard the whisper of the flogger again, and a familiar voice instructed her to count.

Minerva felt the welcome sting of Alessandra's blows, and they began to paint a design of heat and desire across Minerva's arse, occasionally teasing her folds as the flogger was lifted from her flesh on the backstroke. It left her breathless and aching with need. When she had counted the tenth stroke, she could feel her legs trembling beneath her.

She felt hands on her arse, stroking and soothing the sore flesh. A finger crept between her legs, probing gently at her entrance. When the finger slid inside her, she couldn't help emitting a slight hiss. The finger began to move in and out, joined by another stroking her clit.

"Don't come yet," said an unfamiliar voice, and she realised the fingers belonged to the other witch, not Alessandra, who came around to straddle the bench just in front of Minerva's head, spreading her pussy lips with one hand, leaning back and supporting her torso with the other.

Minerva had to stretch her neck to reach Alessandra. She was just able to flick the tip of her tongue over the redhead's nub, and Alesssandra moaned her appreciation for Minerva's efforts. The room was silent now, except for Alessandra's cries and the wet sound of the other woman's fingers pumping in and out of Minerva, and she knew they were the centre of attention. She was so close to coming, so she forestalled her climax by wondering how many of the watchers were her former students. She took a moment to wonder the same about the witch finger-fucking her. She knew Alessandra had not been; she had grown up in Italy, or said she had, which Minerva found something of a relief.

Alessandra came with a cry and pushed herself forward into Minerva's face, so Minerva took the opportunity to plunge her tongue deep into the other witch, feeling her vagina throb and pulse around it. It took her mind off of what was happening to her own.

Shortly, however, Alessandra withdrew, and Minerva felt the other witch remove her fingers. She hadn't been allowed to come yet, and she nearly groaned with frustration.

A moment later, she felt hands on her arse and something blunt pressing against her opening. A large cock slid inside her, and for a few moments, Minerva couldn't tell if it was real flesh or a dildo. It was Alessandra, of course...no wizard would have joined them without their permission...and Minerva could just see in the mirror on the far wall that she was fucking Minerva hard and fast with a big double dildo. Then Alessandra pushed Minerva's legs farther apart and slid underneath her between them to lick and suck at her clit while the magical dildo still pumped in and out of her.

Minerva heard the other witch whisper, "Come now, Miranda . . . come for us . . ." and she did, crying out nonsense syllables in her ecstasy. At least, she thought they were nonsense syllables. But they might have been a name.

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7 April 1996

Albus has left the building.

And I am left to deal with The Toad so that His Twinkliness can toddle off to Do Good Works while I stay behind to clean up the mess. I should have been appointed caretaker, not Deputy.

The staff is stretched so taut you could bounce a Hippogriff off it, and they have all fallen back into their predictable ways of managing stress.

Pomona spends nearly every moment in her greenhouses; I seriously doubt she even takes time to bathe. She finds dirt comforting. Or perhaps it's a way of keeping The Toad from coming too close.

Filius just smiles. A lot. I suspect he's charmed his face.

Severus...ah, poor, damaged boy...takes it out on his students. I'm not certain how he finds time to supervise so many detentions. Now that I think of it, however, perhaps it is his way of keeping them out of the talons of The Toad. I must remember to ask him. Not that he will tell me, of course. Not directly, anyway.

Poppy is distant and vague and unfocussed...and I'm afraid to confess this even to you, dear diary...I'm very much afraid she is depleting her stores of Calming Draught. She has placed a request for more once again this month, although Severus brewed a large batch for the infirmary only two months ago. She claims an increase in students needing it, and I don't doubt that, but still . . .

And Rolanda. Need I even tell you what her method of relief is? She disappears at odd hours, tells me she's out looking for cheap Quidditch supplies and she expects me to believe. Or maybe she doesn't.

It isn't the sleeping around that bothers me. We never pledged fidelity. Not this time; we were smarter this go-around. It's the insult to my intelligence. She thinks I don't know. Or maybe she just pretends she thinks I'm not pretending not to know. Or something like that.

I haven't visited the club since the night she came back. I suppose I foolishly thought this small sacrifice...one she doesn't even know about...would prompt the fates to make her understand.

Christ, the world is slowly crumbling to pieces around me, and I cannot think of a thing but Rolanda and my own troubles. I am, as they say, losing my touch.

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24 August 1996

Minerva walked into the salon of Druantia's Grotto knowing it was the last time.

In truth, she hadn't wanted to come at all, but she felt compelled to keep the "date" she had had with Amelia. The fact of Amelia's death was, Minerva was pained to admit to herself, still an abstract idea. By the time those bastards had caught up with Amelia (and "caught up" was hardly the term; it had been an ambush, six Death Eaters on one ex-Auror, and she had taken down three of them before she fell) she and Minerva had fallen almost entirely out of touch. Three weeks ago, Minerva had owled her, asking if she could accompany Amelia to the next club party, and Amelia had immediately sent back an enthusiastic "yes". Four days later, Amelia was dead.

Minerva felt guilty for not feeling more, and she was afraid that it was a sign of a coarsening of her emotions. The war...her third...and other, more personal upheavals, had left a rough callus on her heart, and she felt the need to pick at it, so she squeezed herself into her corset, feeling the first pricks of loss when she had to lace the thing by magic herself rather than submitting to the pleasant ritual of allowing her former lover to lace her by still-affectionate hand.

She wandered about listlessly, greeting with politeness, but nothing more, those who hailed her. She went to the bar and ordered a tonic water with lime. She hated tonic water, and she hated lime, but it had been Amelia's drink of choice, and Minerva felt it was the least she could do.

An elegantly-dressed wizard Minerva knew as "Karl" stepped in beside her, saying, "Nice to see you again, Miranda. It's been ages."

"Yes, I've been busy," she replied

He asked, "Where's Amanda? Couldn't she make it tonight?"

"No," was all Minerva could manage, and that in a papery croak.

"Oh," said Karl, not pursuing the topic, thinking, no doubt, that he had inadvertently stumbled onto a lovers' quarrel.

They drank together in silence for a few minutes, then Karl said, "You going in?" indicating the public playroom.

"No," said Minerva. "Not just yet."

"All right," he said. "Maybe I'll see you later."

Minerva nodded, and he was off.

She just stood there at the bar with her empty glass. Several others came to speak to her briefly, but no one else mentioned Amelia's absence.

Nobody here knows me now, she thought. I could disappear under the wheels of the Knight Bus on my way home tonight, and not a soul here would ever know! It was a queer feeling to know that, although she'd "known" many of the club's members for nearly 23 years, not one of them knew her name, nor anything real about her other than what she looked like when she climaxed.

And if she were to disappear tonight, none of her other acquaintances would know where to look for her or whom to ask.

She suddenly felt as if she had been abruptly untethered from the world, floating free in space and time.

She dropped her empty glass on the bar and fled.

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5 May 1998

How to tell of what happened?

The words "battle" and "war" and "vanquished" and "dead" seem too lifeless and abstract to describe what has occurred.

"Over." That is a good word. A concrete word. A word I can wrap my mind around. It is over.

And I am alive and Rolanda is alive. Barely.

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31 October 1998

"Sign this please," the club official in charge of admitting guests said, handing Rolanda the quill.

The petite witch glanced nervously at her taller comrade, then scratched her name on the parchment, watching it turn immediately to what looked like ancient runic symbols.

"Neat trick," she remarked, and Minerva gave her a smile.

Why had it been so hard to ask her? Minerva wondered. It was the kind of place that would be right up Rolanda's alley, as it were; Minerva knew that well enough. Rolanda's need for variety had been demonstrated often enough through the many years Minerva had known and loved her.

Why indeed? Perhaps it was that Minerva didn't want to face the fact that she was, underneath it all, no less voracious in her appetites than was Rolanda. Or perhaps it was simply that she didn't want Rolanda to know it. Because somewhere, deep in an unattractive little corner of Minerva's soul, she wanted to be able to play the martyr. To be the pained lover, the patient Penelope waiting for her inamorata to return, finally, to her.

None of it mattered now. The arbitrary and swift hand of death that had come so near so often had brought into sharp focus the broken ends of Minerva's life now that the hand had stilled momentarily.

Fidelity. Duty. Even Truth...these now took a backseat to Happiness. To Love, that great arbiter of what is right and what is wrong, at least if one were to believe the late Albus Dumbledore.

So once Rolanda had healed and Minerva was safely installed as Head of what was left of Hogwarts, she had asked and Rolanda had accepted. It would be neutral territory, they decided. No regrets, no jealousies, no recriminations because they would both be free within these walls, one night per year, or per month, if Minerva could wrangle an invitation for Rolanda to join, which she was fairly certain she could. (And she felt not a whit guilty for scheduling her own nights off to coincide with Rolanda's. There had to be some advantages to being Head.)

When the two witches entered the salon, it was as busy as Minerva had ever seen it. *Post-war euphoria*, she thought. They made their way to the bar, and Minerva introduced Rolanda as "Rosina" to the people they met along the way, noticing the appreciative glances her muscular companion was garnering. She didn't feel a lick of jealousy.

Nor did she when Rolanda was stretched out between the legs of a tall, dark-haired witch whose glamour, thought Minerva, resembled her own face. Nor did she feel any when Rolanda disappeared into a private room with a pair of witches...twins, or glamourised to appear so.

At the end of the evening, when they were back in Minerva's bed in her London flat, and Rolanda's tongue was buried deep within Minerva, her mouth humming contentedly against her, Minerva didn't think once about where that tongue had been earlier that evening. Nor about where it would be tomorrow.

Because in the end, she and Rolanda were alive, and whole, and together, and Minerva found that it was enough.

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"Is that all there is?" asked Hannah.

"Yes," said Neville. "It ends with her May 5th 1998 entry."

"How odd," she remarked. "I wonder why she stopped writing."

Neville shrugged. "Maybe she just didn't need to anymore."

"What about Madam Hooch? Did they ever work things out?"

"I don't know, Hannah. The diary doesn't say. Whatever happened, they were certainly collegial."

"She died, what, two years ago?" asked Hannah.

"Three," said Neville. "She never fully recovered from that curse she took in the war."

"Poor Minerva."

"Maybe," said Neville. "But she'd have hexed you if she heard you say it."

Hannah smiled at her husband. "Well, let's have a look at these," she said taking the letters from the box. "Maybe they'll tell us what happened between them."

"Don't, Hannah," Neville said, putting his hand on her arm.

She gave him a quizzical look and he dropped the hand. "I think we've read enough. And the letters are personal."

"And the diary isn't?" she said.

"Well, yes, but that was just Minerva's, you know? The letters aren't just hers."

"I suppose . . ."

"Anyway," he said, closing the diary and putting it back in the charmed box. "I don't know that I want to know any more. She was a private person."

"You can say that again," said Hannah. "If she carried on a love affair with Rolanda Hooch right under everyone's noses all that time . . ."

"Yes," said Neville, quickly and more sharply than he intended. He was acutely uncomfortable. Not at the idea of Minerva and Rolanda, or Minerva and whatever had been in the encoded diary entries, but at the thought that he had never tried to know her better in life, and now that she was dead he was going traipsing through her most private thoughts as if it were one of his beloved gardens, plucking this memory, that observation for his own enjoyment.

Hannah put a comforting arm around him...she always seemed to know exactly what he needed...saying, "You're right. Let's put them back where you found them. They can stay there. It isn't for us to move them. And you know, I feel better, thinking there's a bit of her left in this room."

Neville smiled his still-shy smile at her, and rose, carrying the box back to the wardrobe. He placed it on the shelf, drew his wand, and cast the charms that would hide it from prying eyes, perhaps until the next wizard or witch to occupy these rooms found them.

~Fin~