

Minerva Musings

by Cat Feral

Professor McGonagall's view of that fateful Halloween.

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Hermione Granger was absent from the Halloween feast. I knew something was amiss when Pomona Sprout asked me why Miss Granger hadn't turned up for Herbology that afternoon. A few discrete questions and a bit of judicious eavesdropping informed me that she had been crying in the girl's bathroom on the basement floor most of the afternoon. A few more questions had given me a good idea why.

The last class Miss Granger had been seen in that day was Charms. Her very first try at levitation had been a glorious success. Her partner, Ronald Weasley, had not been pleased.

Oh, dear. More than once, I had seen Miss Granger running to catch up with Weasley and his constant companion, Harry Potter. I didn't know which of the two the girl most wanted for a friend, but I knew which one found her the most annoying. He made no bones about it.

I wondered what he had said to her. More importantly, I wondered if I should try to talk to her. She reminded me so much of myself at the same age. When I had reason to slink off and cry in a bathroom, the humiliation of being seen was more painful than whatever had driven me there in the first place. Moreover, if I was seen leaving the High Table and then returning and Miss Granger arrived at the feast shortly after, someone was sure to make the connection. *Morgan's Wand, they'll make her life miserable for days! "Teacher's Pet" and "Cry Baby" will be only the beginning!*

As I was trying not to cast anxious looks at her empty seat, young Quirrell rushed in, shrieking about a Troll in the dungeon. As Albus led the defending force – us – to head it off, I knew he was thinking the same thing I was. If we didn't stop it before it left the dungeon, it wouldn't have far to go to find young and helpless prey.

Severus wasn't with us, but I didn't have time to wonder why. I could only trust that he knew what he was doing. Severus Snape is not the pleasantest of my colleagues, but he's highly competent, and no coward.

Under Albus' command we fanned out and entered through different doors, hoping to surround the blasted creature before it knew we were coming. My door was closest to the bathrooms on that floor. I suspect Albus put me there on purpose.

The dungeon was empty. No time to acknowledge the cold hand that squeezed my heart. But as I was running for the girls' bathroom and shouting for the others to follow, a tremendous crash shook the floor.

As I burst in, I was confronted by the sign of two first year boys, Potter and Weasley, standing over the body of a troll. Potter was wiping his wand on the troll's trousers and looking nauseated, Weasley had a raised wand and a stunned expression. Both boys seemed unharmed. My overwhelming relief found vent in fury.

"What on earth were you thinking of? You're lucky you weren't killed. Why aren't you in your dormitory?"

They both began to stammer – they'd be stammering worse when I got through with them! – and then a small voice spoke from a corner I'd somehow missed.

"Please, Professor McGonagall, they were looking for me."

"Miss Granger!" In my shock at seeing the boys, I'd all but forgotten that the girl was down here somewhere.

"I went looking for the troll because I – I thought I could deal with it on my own – you know, because I've read all about them."

And how, precisely, did you know there was a troll to go looking for, considering you were nowhere near the Great Hall when Quirrell gave the alarm? Behind me I heard a wand clatter to the floor. Apparently Miss Granger's story had caught the boys quite off guard.

"If they hadn't found me, I'd be dead now. Harry stuck his wand up its nose, and Ron knocked it out with its own club. They didn't have time to come and fetch anyone. It was about to finish me off when they arrived."

That much I could believe. I nearly lost the fight against a sudden urge to laugh. *Stuck his wand up its nose?? That's a novel way of dealing with a menace! All right, my girl, I see what you're doing, and I can make a fair guess as to what really happened. I'll play along this time.*

"Miss Granger, you foolish girl, how could you think of tackling a mountain troll on your own? Five points will be taken from Gryffindor for this. *If I thought for a moment you were telling the truth, it would be fifty!*" I'm very disappointed in you! If you're not hurt at all..." etc. I wondered if the girl knew I was playing her game. I finished off by giving the boys five points each and a quelling look to make sure they didn't start thinking this sort of thing was clever. They deserved a great deal more. Perhaps someday, when they were older, I'd tell them so.

As I shoed them off to their tower, I realized Severus was standing behind me and young Quirrell was sitting nearby on – well, the only available thing to sit on in a bathroom. Severus gave me a look that spoke volumes. He clearly thought I should have thrown the book at all three of them. I think he knew as well as I did that the "Dream Team" had just become a trio.