

Subtle Communication

by Angharad

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Chapter 1 of 2

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SUBTLE COMMUNICATION

Albus Dumbledore sat at his desk one early summer afternoon, contemplating the need for, and the price of, silence. One silence he had kept for too long, out of love for a boy who was like a grandson to him. Now, another love tempted him to remain silent once more.

When Minerva McGonagall was hit in the chest by four simultaneous stunners, and it was not clear whether she would live through the night, Albus Dumbledore realized with sudden, blinding clarity that, at some point in the last 36 years, he had fallen in love with his deputy. Therein lay his dilemma. If he told her, a strain would be placed upon a partnership that was more important to the wizarding world than his modesty dared admit. If he did not tell her, the openness that characterized all their private moments would be gone. A wedge would be driven between them that would both confuse and hurt this woman, who felt more deeply than most people realized.

Once again, his thoughts came to rest upon young Harry. Albus knew that the boy would need some time to come to terms with the conversation they had that fateful evening, but at least now there was truth between them. Heart-wrenching as it had been to finally tell this boy everything, it had also been liberating. Yes, he mused, *the truth generally is preferable to lies*. Albus made his decision. He would tell Minerva after the students left, when there would be more time for an uninterrupted conversation. Meanwhile, he would make no attempt to hide his feelings.

In her own office, on the same afternoon, Minerva McGonagall sat pondering silence as well. She was a woman who spoke her mind, usually tactfully, sometimes not. However, this time she hesitated.

After the attack, when she had been drifting in and out of consciousness, all Minerva could think about was Albus. At first she thought it was just loneliness exacerbated by her severely weakened condition, not to mention the stress they had all been under during his absence. When he came to see her though, she realized that what she was feeling went far beyond post-trauma fragility. She had no idea when it happened, but the undeniable fact remained that Minerva was in love with her best friend. Now she was in a quandary. If she told him, relations between them would become quite awkward, and that would affect both Hogwarts and the Order. If she didn't tell him, he would know she was hiding something. In time, he would either wheedle it out of her, or she would have to resort to the McGonagall facade of sternness, which she had always been able to drop when they were alone. That would hurt him and, for her, that was a far worse prospect than simple awkwardness. *Surely*, she mused, *our friendship is strong enough to withstand a declaration of love?* Minerva made her decision. She would tell Albus after the students left. In the meantime, she would make no attempt to hide her feelings. Loving a Legilimens would most likely make that a futile exercise, anyway.

Neither Albus nor Minerva seriously considered the notion that their feelings would be returned. Self-denial had become second nature to them, and they had each had more than their share of unhappy romantic attachments. Thus, the remaining weeks of the term took them both by surprise.

It was Albus who first noticed that something had changed. Minerva's voice had acquired a slightly lower pitch whenever she spoke to him, and the warmth that had always been there had become quite pronounced, a combination which he found rather...seductive. She smiled at him frequently too, even in front of students. Finally, whenever they were alone, not only was her manner markedly softer and gentler, she also touched him more a hand on the shoulder here, a shy squeeze of the hand there. Initially, Albus attributed these changes to the attack and its aftermath. His own life experience had taught him that there was nothing like a brush with death to strip the veneer from a person. However, that same life experience had also taught him a great deal about women, and he didn't need Legilimency to see that this was a woman in love. That he was apparently the object of that love was a thought that both humbled and elated him. Thus it was that Albus reached the end of term with a lighter heart, and renewed determination.

Minerva had expected Albus to be especially solicitous of her health and well-being once she returned from St. Mungo's, so the hand he extended to help her to her feet, or the arm he proffered to walk her to class came as no surprise. However, she eventually began to notice that the hand remained in hers longer than was strictly necessary, and the arm would slide around her waist at the first opportunity. Whenever he spoke to her, his marvelous deep voice had a new timbre to it that made her tingle from head to toe. When he looked at her, which he did often, there was a kind of tenderness in his expression that had never been there before. Part of her wanted to believe what her senses were telling her; but the part of her that had been hurt too many times refused, attributing his actions to a perfectly natural need for extra closeness after the events of the past year. Thus it was that Minerva reached the end of term slightly confused, but nonetheless determined.

The day of the students' departure was a busy one for both Albus and Minerva. Between myriad end-of-year duties and Order business, they were kept completely absorbed until teatime, when Albus entered her office with a pot of Assam and assorted confections. They talked of many things students, staff, Fudge's most recent missive (followed closely by a quick note from Kingsley) until Albus sat back with a sigh. "It would appear that I am needed at the Ministry for a few hours," he stated ruefully.

Minerva's sigh echoed his. "Honestly," she observed, "Fudge is sending you more owls now than when he was first made Minister!"

"Yes," he agreed, "but at least we're talking." Albus rose and reached for her hand. "Minerva," he asked, "May I stop by your quarters this evening?" He began to gently stroke her knuckles with his thumb. "Poppy expressed concern that you might not be getting enough rest," he explained, "and I assured her that I would do everything in my power to make certain that you get to bed at a reasonable hour."

Minerva's eyebrows rose nearly to her hairline. "You wish to tuck me in?" she queried, in a voice rendered slightly breathless by his caress.

"Something like that, yes," came Albus' soft reply. He held her hand in both of his now, and was tracing intricate, invisible designs upon her wrist.

"You know the password." Minerva pointed out, in little more than a whisper.

"Until then," Albus responded, lifting her hand to his lips for a lingering kiss. He exited with a courtly bow, leaving a blushing, slightly befuddled, but very pleased witch in his wake.

It was, indeed, several hours before the latest mess at the Ministry was sorted out sufficiently enough for Albus to return. At eight o'clock he arrived at Minerva's door freshly bathed, and wearing new sapphire blue silk robes (he remembered her saying how much she loved the feel of silk next to her skin). He had rehearsed what he was going to say to her in front of Fawkes several times, and the loyal bird had been quite encouraging. However, when he spoke the password and entered her quarters, the sight that greeted him chased his carefully prepared speech right out of his brain.

After dinner, Minerva had treated herself to a long hot bath, both to relax her body and clear her head. Unfortunately, while she was now quite relaxed physically, her mind was in the same pleasant turmoil Albus had placed it in earlier that day. Sighing, she dried herself off, slipped into her new silk tartan dressing gown, and padded into the sitting room to open her recently arrived package from Flourish & Blott's. She was examining its contents when the door opened. Surprised, Minerva looked up and beheld Albus Dumbledore staring at her in a way no man had for a very long time.

The sight of Minerva McGonagall wearing nothing but clinging silk had rendered Albus temporarily speechless. However, he rallied, saying the only thing he could under the circumstances. "Minerva...you look beautiful!"

The blush that had already started when he first looked at her, deepened. "I didn't expect you so soon," she explained, feeling more than a little exposed.

"It's just past eight o'clock," Albus observed quietly, as he stepped closer to her.

"Precisely," Minerva nodded, "much too early for bed."

"Not too early for someone still recovering from four stunners to the chest," Albus pointed out with a gentle smile.

Minerva shook her head. "If I were to go to bed right now, I couldn't possibly fall asleep," she informed him. "I would toss and turn, and stare at the ceiling for hours."

"If you were to go to bed right now," Albus replied, "I would tell you a soothing bedtime story."

Minerva smiled. "Your stories are far too interesting to fall asleep to, Albus," she reminded him.

"Warm milk, then," was Albus' next idea.

"Ugh," Minerva said with a slight grimace. "Besides, I'd just have to get up again to brush my teeth."

"Hot chocolate?"

"The sugar would keep me up even longer."

"Well," Albus was very close to her now, "I have one more suggestion, but I would need your permission to carry it out."

"Why?" she breathed.

"Because," he answered, raising both hands to cup her face, "It would involve me carrying you to the bed, slowly, gently, and tenderly showing you exactly how much I love you, then holding you in my arms while we both drift off to sleep."

It was Minerva's turn to be rendered speechless but, like Albus, it only took her a moment to recover. Winding her arms around his neck, she whispered the four words he most wanted to hear.

"You have my permission."

Intimate Communication

Chapter 2 of 2

Albus takes it upon himself to make certain that Minerva gets to bed at a reasonable hour.

Author's Note: If you have a problem with the idea of people over 60 being in love, and expressing that love physically, please do not read any further. If, however, you have an open mind, please continue.

This chapter is dedicated to Max!

With a mischievous grin, and with an ease that belied his years, Albus scooped Minerva up in his arms and carried her to the bedroom. As he gently placed her on the bed, the folds of her dressing gown parted a little, affording him tantalizing glimpses of breast and thigh. It was her face, however, that commanded his full attention. For many years he had been one of the privileged few to know Minerva's softer side, but her expression now was of completely unguarded adoration, and had he not already been kneeling beside her, he would have been tempted to do something rather excessive, such as fall at her feet. As it was, he did the only rational thing he could possibly do under the circumstances. Lowering himself down, he kissed her slowly, softly, and deeply.

It was the kind of kiss Minerva thought only existed in the imaginations of certain writers. Now, however, she was forced to conclude that she simply hadn't been kissed properly before. *Perhaps it's a skill one learns with time*, she thought muzzily.

Who would have thought that lips which can be set in such stern lines could be this soft, warm, and talented Albus mused in wonder.

It didn't take long before they both were aching for more. Having explored her mouth thoroughly, Albus was eager to learn how the rest of her tasted. The first thing he tried was a particularly delectable place just below her ear. He was rewarded with a delighted gasp that was music to his own ears. Encouraged, he continued his explorations, traveling further down her neck, eliciting more soft sighs until he reached the spot where neck and shoulder come together. That looked so tasty that he simply had to nibble on it a little. Her reaction to that was a bit more vocal, so he decided to stay there for awhile.

Minerva arched her back and buried her fingers in his long, silvery hair, delighting in its unexpected softness. When she began to massage his scalp and neck with her nails, the moan she elicited from him reverberated through her body as well.

As Albus worked his way further down, Minerva began to squirm. While that felt rather pleasant to him, the small, strained half-giggle from her indicated that something was amiss. He raised his head and looked at her questioningly.

"I'm a bit ticklish there at the moment," she breathed.

Albus laid his hand tenderly upon the spot in the middle of her chest where the stunners had hit; the skin was still a little bit pink. "Right here?" he asked.

"It's only very light touches that tickle," she explained. "More pressure is fine."

Albus grinned. "So this," he stroked the spot gently but firmly, "is all right?" she nodded. "But this," he ran a few strands of his beard very lightly over it, "tickles?" She squirmed again in response, and as she did so her hip brushed against a very firm portion of his anatomy. He let out a soft groan and, raising himself slightly, undid the sash of her dressing gown and pushed the fabric aside. Her porcelain skin had a few stretch marks, and gravity had begun to make its presence visible, but for Albus she was "Perfect," he whispered as he lowered himself down to kiss her.

"You're wearing too much," she observed huskily.

"I thought you liked the feeling of silk next to your skin," he was grinning again.

"I want to feel you now," she dug her nails into his back for emphasis.

Ever willing to oblige a lady, Albus dispensed with their remaining clothing with a wave of his hand. Now that they were skin-to-skin, he felt an overwhelming urge to bury himself in her right then and there, and from the way she was wrapping her arms and legs around him, she obviously wouldn't have minded in the least. However, he hadn't tasted nearly enough yet, so he resisted the urge and turned his attention to her breasts instead. He sinuously slid his tongue around the curve of each as if it were an ice cream cone, then gently nibbled and sucked on each nipple until Minerva thought she would go pleasantly mad. Reaching out, she found his nipples, firmly squeezing and rolling each between thumb and forefinger. Letting out a low growl, he looked up at her. "I won't last long if you keep that up," he informed her in a ragged voice.

"Really?" she asked coyly, filing this bit of information away for future reference.

"Indeed," he replied as he wriggled out of her grasp and slowly began kissing a path to her center. When he reached his destination, he gently parted the folds as his tongue began the most intimate of explorations. "Mmm," he murmured happily, "whipped cream."

"Hmm?" she queried languidly.

"Right here," he explained delightedly, "it's exactly the texture of fresh whipped cream."

Only Albus Dumbledore would compare her inner lips to whipped cream, and if his sweet-addled tongue hadn't been distracting her in other ways, Minerva would have laughed out loud. As it was, she wondered hazily if years of sucking on sherbet lemons served quite a different purpose than she had originally supposed. But when he inserted two fingers, and then crooked them upward, she ceased wondering altogether and simply abandoned herself to the sensations.

It wasn't long before she came, and Albus decided that the sight of Minerva McGonagall in the midst of a toe-curling orgasm - writhing, bucking and crying out his name with those talented lips of hers - was something he wanted to see as often as possible. Kissing his way back up her now flushed torso, he positioned himself at her entrance. His eyes never left hers as he finally buried himself deep inside her moist, welcoming heat. They moved very slowly at first, savoring the moment, but soon the two found their own easy, gentle rhythm. So absorbed was Minerva in the sensation of his lightly-furred chest against hers, the feel of his soft belly, the texture and surprising strength of his back muscles under her hands, and the sheer joy of having him fill her so completely, that her second orgasm almost took her by surprise. For his part, Albus was so overwhelmed by her softness, her spicy scent, the sweet sounds she made, and the exquisite bliss of having her surround him so snugly, that he was almost in a trance. The spasms of her release triggered his, as each called the other's name into the night.

Exhausted, but not willing to let each other go, they moved apart just enough for Albus to rest his head on a pillow, while Minerva pillowed her head on Albus. "You know," she murmured contentedly, "I like your way of getting me to go to bed at a reasonable hour."

Albus chuckled. "I'm glad to hear it," he responded, kissing her hand, "since I plan on making certain that you get plenty of rest."

"And what happens when Poppy gives me a clean bill of health?" Minerva asked, smiling.

"By that time," he assured her, "I will undoubtedly be in need of a good deal of rest myself."

"Then I'll have to bring you a cup of hot chocolate to help you sleep," she countered playfully.

"Only if you add whipped cream."