

From the Desk of Rita Skeeter

by Cat Feral

Over on the Minerva Magic thread, I asked the question, "If Rita Skeeter wanted to shred Minerva's reputation, how would she go about it? From that concept, this twisted little fic was born. Honesty compels me to admit that the last couple of paragraphs are my Beta's.

one-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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It has come to our attention that Professor Minerva McGonagall, Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts and Head of Gryffindor House, has been closeted in her office with Sixth Year student Harry Potter nearly every night since the beginning of the school year. Ms. McGonagall is allegedly coaching Mr. Potter for his Newts because he intends to apply for Auror training.

Admirable – at least on the surface. However, there are those who feel that Professor McGonagall has had an inordinate fascination with young Mr. Potter since he first arrived at Hogwarts.

"It was really strange," says Sixth Year Draco Malfoy. "We hadn't been here a week when she started showing how much she favored Potter. We were in the middle of our first flying lesson. Some kid got hurt, and the instructor had to take him to the hospital wing. While she was gone, McGonagall showed up and took Potter off somewhere for almost an hour. Then, next thing anyone knows, Potter's got an expensive new broom and a place on the Gryffindor Quidditch team! First Years aren't even allowed to have their own brooms, and before Potter, there hadn't been a First Year on the team in over a century!

Questioned about his relationship with his Head of House, Potter replied, "Trying to ruin McGonagall's life now, are you, you miserable cow? Why don't you go do an article on Umbridge? You two deserve each other!"

At his suggestion, we spoke with Dolores Umbridge, former aide to the Minister of Magic. What we learned leads us to wonder if Harry's sending us to her was a veiled cry for help.

"I'm glad **someone's** finally taking notice of the situation!" says Ms. Umbridge. "During the time that I was High Inquisitor at Hogwarts, I was all too aware of that woman's apparent – hem-hem – fixation on the Potter boy. She fought my every attempt to discipline him or turn his mind in a more wholesome direction. She seemed to downright encourage his warped fantasies and paranoia. He spent an inordinate amount of time in her office. It was unnerving. Of course, I wouldn't like to suggest anything untoward, but life must be rather lonely for a woman of her... disposition... and for a spinster who is – let us be honest – not getting any younger, so much access to young people could create certain – hem-hem – temptations. I shall say no more."

Fifth Year Gryffindor, Colin Creevey, responded, "Girls his own age? Yeah, well, I think Harry kind of liked Cho Chang for a while. Then, I don't know, I guess they had a

fight or something. Next thing I knew Cho's going with Michael Corner. Vulnerable? I don't know, he didn't really say. Well, a guy wouldn't tell the world, would he? Yeah, I guess it was around then that Professor McG. started giving Harry extra coaching, why? Hey, do you think your photographer would have time to look at some of my pictures and give me a few pointers?"

When asked what she had to say, Ms. McGonagall replied evasively, "Oh, go away, you ridiculous woman."

Is the challenging environment of Hogwarts really the best place for a child whose past is so filled with tragedy? The records kept by the school's medical practitioner, Madam Pomfrey, indicate that Harry Potter has faced severe and sometimes almost lethal injuries every year of his attendance. Is this coincidence? Or do deep injuries to the soul, hidden even from their bearer, cry for release?

Imagine oneself a schoolboy, innocent, untutored, better accustomed to the company of Muggles than that of wizards. Imagine, just hypothetically, that he has some complaint against his teacher . . . who is also his Head of House, Assistant Headmistress, and a favorite of the elderly and possibly senescent Headmaster. (A man odd enough, I remind my readers, to have allowed both a half-giant and a werewolf to teach at Hogwarts.) To whom could he turn? To whom, in his desperation, could he speak?

The hopes of fearful and unbalanced people attach themselves to The Boy Who Lived, but he's just a boy. As he approaches manhood, let us make certain he can live with what he learns.