

Photographic Evidence

by Angharad

Professor McGonagall, Professor Sprout, and Madam Hooch decide that for certain damaging prejudices, a full frontal assault is in order.

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Chapter 1 of 2

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Author's Note: This story is the result of a challenge issued by minerva_fan in reaction to an absurd poll on Fiction Alley. It was also inspired by "Calendar Girls", and a little slip of the robe in "My House in Umbria".

Photographic Evidence

It was Friday night at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and Professor Minerva McGonagall was enjoying a little piece of heaven in the form of Sidney Scathach's Salacious Single Malt Scotch (despite the name), after a long hot bath. Sitting in front of the fire in only her dressing gown, she let the remaining tension of a day filled with accident prone students, harried staff, and Headmaster who would put her copy of the school budget in his candy drawer, ebb from her body. She was just about to reach for her book when she heard a knock at the door. Sighing, she rose and crossed the room swiftly, expecting some sort of student crisis, real or imagined. However, when she opened the door she was instead confronted with the smiling countenance of Professor Pomona Sprout, and the glowering one of Madam Rolanda Hooch.

"Good evening Minerva," Pomona began. "Sorry to barge in here without notice, but..."

"Read this." Rolanda handed Minerva a piece of paper as she strode across the room and collapsed unceremoniously onto the sofa. Pomona plunked herself down as well, opening then rummaging through the rather large bag she had brought.

Minerva read, "Which Professor should stay clothed?" Under that sentence was a list of names, hers and Pomona's included. "Where did you get this?" Minerva asked quietly too quietly.

"In the locker room," Rolanda growled, "and when I find out who is responsible, I'll hex his or her broom personally!"

"I don't see your name here," Minerva pointed out, as she returned to her seat in the armchair.

"No, but my friends' are," Rolanda responded with warmth.

"This is obviously nothing more than a prank dreamed up by a few students who are unhappy with their latest exams," Minerva asserted, though she continued to look rather balefully at the offending parchment.

Rolanda shook her head. "I don't think so. If you read between the lines you'll see a definite prejudice against anyone of a certain age or body shape." Minerva looked skeptical. "I mean look at this 'old lady boobs'! First of all, a seventy-something witch is middle-aged, not old. But even if you were, what's wrong with 'old lady boobs'? My

grandmother has a great rack!"

"Perhaps these particular students have never met your grandmother," Minerva suggested with a grin.

"That's not the point and you know it!" Rolanda was exasperated. "What's obvious here is that we need to do something about the influence of certain Muggle publications in this school!"

"Minerva," Pomona chimed in, "have you ever seen Muggle women's magazines?"

Minerva snorted. "A Muggle magazine article was the reason Miss Thomkins was in the Hospital Wing yesterday," she reported. "The child was trying to move her eyebrows up half an inch!" She picked up her glass, then continued, "Last month Miss Wilson had to be brought there because she nearly blinded herself trying to remove the natural creases around her eyes!"

Pomona nodded. "Miss Harrison made a so-called 'Weight Loss Elixir' from a recipe in one of those ridiculous publications," she told them. "She thought that using the magical versions of the ingredients listed would make it that much more effective," her voice shook as she uttered the next sentence. "If I had arrived ten minutes later than I did, the girl would have died."

All three women stared into the fire for a few moments, lost in thought, before Minerva ventured, "I have been teaching for nearly forty years, and even with the grain of salt one must always take with teenagers, it seems to me that there is a significant portion of Muggle culture devoted to a sort of subliminal subjugation of women." She took a long drink before continuing, "Are Muggle men really that narrow-minded? Or are there a few very powerful ones who are imposing their tastes on all the rest? And why on earth do Muggle women put up with such nonsense?"

"It's not just the men," replied Rolanda darkly. "Many of these magazines are headed up by women."

"You're joking," Minerva was appalled. "You cannot possibly tell me that any woman, Muggle or Witch, would willingly participate in her own enslavement!"

Pomona sighed. "It's true, I'm afraid. Just as we have a small group of Witches and Wizards trying to impose their twisted ideas and ludicrous prejudices on the rest of us by any means necessary, there appears to be a small group of Muggle men and women who are quite successfully imposing their rather two-dimensional ideals of beauty and desirability upon innocent young people."

"It doesn't stop with the youngsters, though," Rolanda reminded her. "I've heard of grown Muggle women who inject horrible substances into their blood, or have doctors put jelly balloons in their breasts. There's even some sort of operation that stretches the wrinkles out of their faces, but leaves them looking like different people."

"All in an effort to look like the women in the magazines?" Minerva was quite shocked.

"The thing is," Pomona informed them, "the women in the magazines don't even look like that." She leaned forward for emphasis. "Mr. Creevey, whom I'm sure you've noticed is very keen on photography, told me that these magazine people do something called 'air brushing', where they simply remove things like wrinkles, freckles, stretch marks, moles, or what-have-you from the photographs."

"In other words," Rolanda concluded, "they're shoving an ideal that doesn't even exist down the throats of impressionable young people, who then grow up to perpetuate it."

"Well, it will not be perpetuated here," Minerva announced, "not while I have any say in the matter."

"What do you propose we do, ban Muggle publications altogether?" Rolanda wanted to know.

Minerva shook her head. "Of course not," she replied with a snort. "We'd be no better than Dolores Umbridge."

"You know, I've always thought that Muggle Studies should be required rather than elective," Pomona offered thoughtfully.

"I agree," Minerva responded, "only we should expand the course to include all non-wizard cultures." She shuddered. "In the last year I have seen more bad decisions made as the result of sheer ignorance than I have seen in fifty years."

"Well, what are we going to do while we wait for the curriculum to be re-vamped?" Rolanda demanded.

"What do you suggest?" countered Minerva.

"Photographic evidence!" Rolanda's eyes were shining. Minerva looked puzzled. "These young pranksters," Rolanda retrieved the parchment from Minerva and brandished it as she spoke, "have obviously never seen an attractive woman over the age of twenty-five or over the weight of one hundred twenty-five scantily clad, much less naked in all her glory. So," she concluded, tossing the parchment onto the side table, "I suggest we show them what they've been missing."

"And how do you propose 'we' do that?" Minerva's voice had become very quiet again.

As if on cue, Pomona took from her handbag the largest and most complex-looking camera Minerva had ever seen. "With this." She beamed. "State of the art and hexproof!"

"Surely you're not suggesting that we...expose ourselves?" Minerva gasped.

"Certainly." Pomona began fiddling with a knob on one side of the camera. "I'll take a picture of you tonight, and my husband will photograph me when he returns next Friday."

"It's not like we're asking you to stretch out on your bed and pose..." Rolanda began.

"That's what I'll be doing," interjected Pomona, who was now fiddling with a knob on the back end of the camera.

"We thought maybe you could sit at your dressing table or something and comb your hair while wearing just your dressing gown only leave it untied, you see." Rolanda was speaking very quickly now, in an effort to get it all out before the impending explosion. "Pomona here will merely snap away while you do it. Something interesting is bound to pop out, so to speak, and that's the one we'll drop."

"Drop?" was all Minerva could manage.

"That's right," Pomona took up the narrative. "I'll develop the film and drop one, and only one, print in the Hufflepuff common room. Don't worry!" She held up her hand as Minerva opened her mouth to protest. "I will track it and put an anti-duplication charm on it, and if the photograph leaves the building it will burst into flames. After about eight hours it will disintegrate of its own accord. By that time the H.R.C.C.S. will be in full force anyway."

"H.R.C.C.S.?" Now it was Rolanda's turn to look puzzled.

"The Hogwarts Rumor and Contraband Circulation System," Pomona explained with a grin. "Miss Bones came up with the name last year. Such a clever girl!"

"And what if the Headmaster sees it? Or the rest of the staff? What if one of the school Governors stops by for a visit?" demanded an incredulous Minerva.

"I imagine it will give their libidos a welcome jump start," Rolanda surmised.

"You could say that you had no idea that your lover had actually printed that picture," offered Pomona.

"I don't have a lover," Minerva retorted through gritted teeth.

"You might, after this," Rolanda observed with a grin.

"Then I'll say that someone was obviously using one of these lenses," Pomona pulled what looked like a small club from her bag as she spoke, "from the fir tree outside your window."

Perhaps it was the scotch, or the slight sting of the personal insult in the poll, or perhaps it was the all-too-recent memory of yet another girl injuring herself while attempting cosmetic "improvement". It might even have been a combination of all these things. Whatever the reason, after more camera-fiddling on the part of Pomona, and some scene setting from Rolanda ("Well we need to have you angled toward the window if the fir tree story is going to fly") Minerva found herself seated in front of her dressing table, gown unfastened, and hairbrush in hand. "Now what?" she asked, feeling a bit nervous.

"Have a healthy swig of that stuff and start brushing," Rolanda answered encouragingly.

Minerva felt quite awkward at first, even after the suggested swig. However, the rhythmic motion of this nightly ritual soon began to relax her, as it always did, and her mind began to wander a bit, flitting easily from one subject to the next, away from the busily clicking Pomona, until she was almost in a light trance. It was at that moment that Rolanda's voice interrupted her thoughts, "Honestly Minerva, you're either going to have to lower your necklines or tighten your robes." Minerva looked up, confused. "Tracts of land like you have should be displayed, not hidden behind high collars and loose fabric," Rolanda finished appreciatively.

"She's right you know," Pomona observed as she began packing the camera away. "And if I had legs like yours all of my robes would have slits up the side."

Minerva blushed. "Well, if I don't get called on the carpet for this," she decided, closing and tying her dressing gown again, "I'll let you two take me wardrobe shopping."

Rolanda grinned. "You might end up on the carpet..." she began.

"Rug burns are nasty though." Pomona grimaced. "Unless it's bearskin, of course."

Blushing again, Minerva shooed them both towards the door. "I think you had both better leave before I change my mind," she warned them, though she was still smiling.

"We'll keep you posted," were Pomona's last words as the two conspirators merrily exited Minerva's chambers.

Minerva's final thought as she shut the door was, *What on earth have I gotten myself into?*

To be continued...

Age and Beauty

Chapter 2 of 2

Minerva's photograph causes a bit of a stir.

Age and Beauty

Saturday breakfast in the Great Hall was normally a relatively quiet affair, inasmuch as any gathering of students outside the classroom could be termed "quiet". On this particular morning, though, there seemed to be a bit more to-ing and fro-ing between House tables than usual. Headmaster Dumbledore noticed this and commented upon it to his uncharacteristically flushed Deputy, who offered the opinion that it most likely had something to do with an upcoming Weird Sisters concert or some such nonsense.

Professor Flitwick disagreed. "As I went by the Ravenclaw table, I saw some of the older boys passing around a rather tastefully enticing photograph."

"Really?" Professor Dumbledore was curious. "Anyone we know?"

Minerva held her breath.

"All I could see, before it changed hands, was that she had long dark hair, she was brushing it you see, and quite lovely...er, attributes." He blushed at this point, no doubt remembering that there were ladies present.

Minerva let out her breath slowly, though she did smile to herself at the Charms professor's assessment.

"Well, whoever the lady is, her photo is proving to be quite sought after," the Headmaster observed. "Perhaps it's that new singer I've heard about."

"Lucinda Larkwing?" Madam Hooch asked, with a sidelong glance at Minerva.

Professor Dumbledore nodded. "That's the one."

"I wasn't aware that she actually brushed her hair," Professor Snape interjected.

"Oh, that wild look is carefully cultivated, I can assure you," Pomona Sprout chimed in. "I imagine she spends hours at the dressing table."

Professor Snape snorted inelegantly and resumed his breakfast, all the while keeping a close watch on the proceedings at the student tables.

Minerva pointedly ignored Pomona's and Rolanda's knowing grins, and turned her attention instead to the Gryffindor table, where a knot of very intent students had formed at the opposite end.

Dean Thomas had been rather preoccupied at the breakfast table this morning. Earlier in the term, at Professor McGonagall's suggestion, he had signed up for art lessons, which were given once a week by a witch who came up from Hogsmeade. During the course of these lessons it was discovered that he had a real knack for portraiture, and one of his favorite things to do was sketch people while they were doing something else, unaware that they were being sketched at all. This, he felt, gave his drawings

more vitality and, if he really got it right, captured a small facet of the subject's personality. Today he was attempting to sketch Susan Bones over at the Hufflepuff table, but was having a rough time of it because she kept half getting up and craning her neck towards the Ravenclaw table, as though she were looking for something or someone, then sitting down to take a bite or two, only to jump up again. He was just about to give it up as a bad job when she rose and came towards him, hot on the heels of Michael Corner, who was striding purposefully towards Dean's end of the Gryffindor table.

"You can draw this can't you, mate?" Michael handed Dean a photograph before plunking himself down next to him. "There's some sort of anti-copying charm on it that none of us can break, but I thought maybe a drawing would get around that."

The photo was of a woman sitting at a small table, wearing a dressing gown, and brushing her long black hair. When she raised her arms slightly, it became quite apparent that the dressing gown was the only thing she was wearing. Dean grinned. "Nice rack," he commented. "Her legs aren't bad either."

Michael laughed. "Yeah, who knew McGonagall was hot?"

"What?" Dean looked reflexively at the Head Table.

Michael laughed even harder. "Look at the face in the photo, mate!"

Dean stared hard at the woman in the photograph. Without her square spectacles, her trademark bun, and her customary stern expression - not to mention her usual attire - Professor McGonagall looked...well, different - obviously so different that he hadn't recognized her at first glance. Now that he did, though, embarrassment and curiosity fought for the upper hand in his mind. Curiosity won. "Where did you get this?"

"I found it in the Hufflepuff common room." Susan Bones joined the conversation. "It was on a table next to the fireplace."

"Well whose is it?" Dean wanted to know.

"How should I know?" Susan replied reasonably. "No one jumped up and down saying 'it's mine' or anything. They mostly just grabbed at it, or had fits."

"Fits?" Michael looked skeptical.

"Yeah," Susan confirmed. "Justin kept clutching at his eyes and going on about his Transfiguration essay; Ernie kept trying to copy the thing for his uncle, and a bunch of the seventh years started arguing about whether it was a "pre-shag or post-shag" photo." She rolled her eyes.

"The Ravenclaws think it's a *Witch Monthly* original," Michael revealed.

"What's *Witch Monthly*?" Dean asked.

"It's a magazine that has really high quality nude photos of witches and articles about sex and relationships," Susan answered matter-of-factly. "There's a *Wizard Monthly* too."

"But isn't McGonagall too old for something like that?" Dean was confused.

"What do you mean 'too old'?" Susan gave him an odd look.

"Terry's great-grandmother was in it a couple of months ago," Michael informed him, "and she's over one hundred."

"Don't Muggles have magazines like that?" Susan was curious now.

"Well, yeah," Dean squirmed uncomfortably in his seat, "but all the women in them are young."

"Then what do all the old folks look at?" Michael was puzzled.

Dean was at a loss. "I don't know," he admitted, "the young ones, I guess."

"That's sick," Susan declared.

"Yeah," Michael agreed. "My great-great-grandfather always says 'Find me one who looks like she might know what she's about behind the bed curtains!'"

Dean looked down at the photo again. *Would McGonagall know what...?* He blushed at his train of thought, grateful for its interruption in the form of Neville Longbottom, who had been silent until now.

"I read somewhere that Muggle men are required by law to get divorced when their wives turn forty-five," Neville began. "Maybe that's why only young women's photos are allowed."

"That law is only for celebrities and really rich men," Susan corrected him authoritatively. "And the wives can get around it if they agree to stretch their faces and inject themselves with food poisoning serum."

"Now that really is sick." Michael looked at her disbelievingly. "That can't possibly be true."

"It isn't," Dean cut in before Susan could retort. "There's no such law, though an awful lot of famous Muggle men do ditch their wives for younger models, and it does seem like a lot of Muggle women do strange things to look young."

"Weird," Michael observed.

"Well anyway," Colin Creevey, who had been sitting next to Dean all this time, suddenly spoke, "that can't be a *Witch Monthly* original."

"Why not?" Michael wanted to know.

"Every *Witch Monthly* photograph has the *Witch Monthly* slogan somewhere in the shot," Colin explained. "It's either on a book, or a piece of paper, or a ribbon or something like that, but it's always there. I've looked all over this photo and there's no slogan."

"Well then who took it and what was it doing in our common room?" Susan voiced the question that was in all of their minds.

"Maybe her husband took it," Michael reasoned.

"She's not married." Susan shook her head. "My auntie told me."

"Boyfriend?" offered Neville uncertainly. "Girlfriend?"

"That still wouldn't explain how it ended up in the Hufflepuff common room," Michael mused, "unless she and Sprout..."

Susan shook her head again. "Sprout is very happily married."

"Your auntie tell you that too?" Michael was growing slightly impatient.

"Yes, as a matter of fact," Susan retorted.

"Lay off, Michael," Neville interjected. "I met Professor Sprout's husband last week, and well...they still hold hands." He reached over and took a large handful of bacon in an attempt to hide the slight blush that had begun to form on his cheeks.

"Maybe Hufflepuff House has a Peeping Tom," Colin speculated.

"What are you talking about?" demanded an outraged Susan Bones.

"There's a very large tree right outside McGonagall's window," Colin told her. "Anyone with the right lense could have taken that photo."

"How do you know that?" Neville stared at Colin.

"I happen to know a great deal about photography," sniffed Colin indignantly.

"I meant the tree," Neville shot back.

"Oh, that." Colin looked a bit sheepish. "I was circling Gryffindor Tower during a flying lesson when I passed a window and saw McGonagall taking a bunch of tartan things off the bed and putting them into the wardrobe. Then I hit the tree."

"You've just proven that the Peeping Tom doesn't have to be a Hufflepuff," Susan pointed out after the snickers had subsided. "It could just as easily be a camera-crazy Gryffindor who shares with his mates!"

"I would never do that to my Head of House," asserted an aggrieved Colin. "Besides, whoever took that photo has a far better camera. That's professional quality, that is."

"She's right about the sharing part though," Neville pointed out. "Everyone has friends in other Houses, even Slytherins."

"I don't know anyone who has a professional quality camera," Susan stated.

"Neither do I," Michael admitted.

"I think we'd know if someone had something like that in Gryffindor, don't you think?" Dean asked Colin, who nodded thoughtfully.

"Not even the most advanced seventh years could break whatever anti-copying charm is on this thing," Michael added, "so I think we're looking at an experienced witch or wizard here."

Neville was beginning to look rather worried. "What if it's someone who wants to hurt her in some way?" he thought out loud.

"What do you mean?" Susan turned to look at him fully.

"Do you remember that bloke in the *Daily Prophet* who took pictures of a lady across an alley, then showed them to her husband?" When the others nodded, he went on, "Well, what if someone's taking pictures of Professor McGonagall and putting them in our common rooms, with the idea that someone will go to the school Governors about it?"

The other boys at the table looked blank, but Susan's eyes grew very wide. "They might accuse her of having an affair with a student!"

Dean was skeptical. "No one would believe that, not even for a moment," he scoffed.

"People have been believing a lot of wrong things lately," Neville reminded them.

They were all silent for a moment, pondering this, when Dean ventured, "If someone is doing that, they're going to need lots of different photos, not just one."

"So?" Colin wasn't following.

"So," Dean continued, "maybe we should be keeping an eye on that tree."

Just as Professor Sprout had promised, the photo disintegrated into a fine powder at three o'clock that afternoon. Unfortunately for those who witnessed it, the powder in question all too closely resembled that contained in Fizzing Whizbees. This sorely provoked Madam Pince, who made quick work of waving away the mess with one hand and shooing the hapless students out of the library with the other. There was one other witness, hovering on the edge of the scene, who remained in the stacks after the others had gone, pondering what he had seen before sweeping out on an errand of his own, black robes billowing behind him.

Minerva, after having spent most of the day in her office grading fifth year essays (hiding, Madam Hooch called it), was quite relieved to hear from Professor Sprout that the photo was no longer in circulation. She was not pleased, however, to learn of a small hitch in the plan. "What sort of miscalculation are you talking about, Pomona?" she queried the Herbology professor sharply.

"While I charmed the photo against duplication by magical means, I did not take into account your young Mr. Thomas' penchant for portraiture," Pomona was obviously vexed with herself.

"Good heavens!" Minerva was aghast. "When I saw him sketching at breakfast, I had no idea..." she trailed off, mortified.

"It's really a lovely likeness," Pomona confided hesitantly. "That young man is quite talented."

"How many of them have you seen?" Minerva was wide-eyed.

"Only one," Pomona assured her. "Ernest MacMillan was down to see me earlier this afternoon and I saw it when he opened his folder."

Minerva shook her head. "Where there's one, there will be many," she sighed, defeated. "It's only a matter of time before one of the staff happens upon it."

"In which case, we'll simply chalk it up to a student crush indulging in artistic license," Pomona declared with a twinkle in her eye.

Minerva chuckled. "And remind them that it has to be better than bad erotic poetry adorning the hallways."

Dinner passed without incident, and it was a very tired Minerva McGonagall who prepared herself for bed that evening. Deciding that she would treat herself to a bit of a lie-in the following morning, she approached her bedroom window, undoing the ties that held the curtains in place. Then she saw it a flicker of movement, level with her window, where the branches of the tree outside almost touched the tower. She waited, pretending to adjust the plants on the sill, and it appeared again.

This time, she couldn't blame it on the scotch. Nor did she have her two closest friends egging her on. A long-dormant part of Professor McGonagall was beginning to awaken, and with a mischievous smile she looked straight out into the night. *Well, well, well*, she thought to herself, *I certainly hope that what you're about to see is worth*

the detention. And with that, she dropped her dressing gown to the floor, slowly reaching out to close the curtains. She was not surprised to hear the characteristic rustle of leaves and knocking of wood upon wood that invariably accompanied a collision of broomstick with branch. What she did not expect, however, was the timbre of the voice that uttered the muffled curse that usually goes along with such incidents. She smiled again. *I wonder if Severus will have a limp in the morning?*

To be continued...