

A Marriage Of...?

by Angharad

Once again, Albus Dumbledore takes the fall for the Wizarding World.

Part One

Chapter 1 of 2

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Author's Note: This is for Bleedswean, who has been demanding more Sexy!Dumbledore stories involving the Marriage Law. ;)

"Remind me not to make offhand remarks at the Ministry in the near future."

Albus Dumbledore and Minerva McGonagall were sitting in his office going through the usual morning mountain of correspondence. Minerva was working her way through the bills and tidily incinerating the advertisements (including Tuppence Tiffendale's Terrifically Transfigurable Teapots), while Albus tackled the more personal letters and Ministry directives. It was the latter that he handed to her now, leaving his hands free to clutch his head in a rather excessive display of frustration.

"What casual utterance have they taken as Divine Revelation this time?" Minerva asked as she took the letter from his hand.

Wordlessly he indicated the document in question as he began to massage his temples.

Minerva read aloud, "Wizardkind Preservation Decree Number One: All fertile witches and wizards over the age of eighteen, who are not already married, must marry within one month of the date of this decree. Those who are not married by that time will have a spouse chosen for them. Furthermore, all fertile married couples must produce one child, or be expecting one, during the subsequent twelve months. Those who have neither produced nor are expecting a child by that time will be required to submit to comprehensive diagnostic evaluation. Couples who have already produced two children will be considered exempt from this decree. Failure to abide by this decree will result in severe penalties including, but not limited to, loss of employment, loss of property, and exile from the Wizarding Community." She looked at Albus, aghast. "What on earth did you say?"

He shrugged helplessly. "We were talking about the declines in Wizarding birthrates during the Grindelwald War and the first and second Voldemort Wars, in light of the newest statistics, which, as you know, aren't appreciably higher. I said, jokingly, that if perhaps there was some kind of incentive for couples to marry and have children, there would be a Wizarding population explosion in five years."

"Well, it would appear that not only does our young Minister lack a sense of humor, he also doesn't seem to grasp the difference between 'incentive' and 'threat'," Minerva observed tersely. "I suppose you'll be off to sort this out shortly?"

Albus nodded. "If Amelia Bones had been appointed Minister of Magic, none of this would be necessary," he commented with feeling.

"Perhaps those who appointed Percy Weasley will finally realize that sycophancy does not equal suitability," Minerva countered pointedly.

Indeed, that very morning *The Daily Prophet* waxed quite vitriolic upon the subject of Minister Percy Weasley's failings, which had the unfortunate result of causing him and his staff to dig their heels in further, even going so far as to create a list of single witches and wizards, and hand-delivering both the list and the decree to every known Wizarding household. It was at this point that Albus arrived at the Ministry and demanded an immediate audience with the Minister. Naturally, an audience was granted, the

results of which appeared in the next morning's *Daily Prophet*:

Wizardkind Preservation Decree Number One – Revised (changes in bold): All fertile witches and wizards over the age of **twenty-five**, must marry within **one year** of the date of this decree. Those who are not married by that time will have a spouse chosen for them. Furthermore, all fertile married couples must produce one child, or be expecting one, during the subsequent **two years**. Those who have neither produced nor are expecting a child by that time will be required to submit to comprehensive diagnostic evaluation. Couples who have already produced two children will be considered exempt from this decree. Failure to abide by this decree will result in severe penalties including, but not limited to, loss of employment, loss of property, and exile from the Wizarding Community. **In order to ensure the most accurate count of the current Wizarding population, as well as the most accurate measurements of its fertility, an immediate blood-sampling census has been ordered by the Minister of Magic.**

"I thought you said you had taken care of the problem!" Minerva scolded Albus over breakfast that morning. "Granted, you've bought everyone some time, but this blood test census is an unprecedented invasion of privacy..."

"...and as such will warrant an automatic full review by the Wizengamot." Albus finished calmly.

Minerva was silent for a several moments, then smiled coldly. "He'll be out of office in six months."

"Precisely," Albus confirmed.

"How in the world did you get him to propose such a rash thing?" Minerva wanted to know. "Percy Weasley has never been stupid. Misguided, yes, but never stupid."

"I appealed to his sense of efficiency," Albus explained. "I reminded him that not everyone is capable of producing children, and suggested that knowing who can and cannot would save a lot of time and paperwork in the long term." Albus' expression turned grim. "After that, it was merely a question of what type of rope he would choose, so to speak."

"Poor Molly and Arthur," Minerva sighed.

"I wouldn't worry about them too much," Albus reassured her. "I had dinner with them and Amelia Bones last night, during which we discussed possible post-demotion assignments for young Mr. Weasley."

"Oh really?" Minerva was intrigued.

Albus nodded. "We all agreed that what Percy Weasley needs is to fully understand exactly what life is like for the less fortunate among us – not those who must bear the ridicule that comes from having a poor, eccentric, loving pureblood family – but people who truly struggle from day to day."

"Quite so," Minerva concurred. "The Shelter, then?"

"Yes," Albus replied quietly. "He'll need to be disguised and will require constant supervision, but if Percy Weasley has any hope of redemption, as I believe he has, then he must begin his journey there."

They ate in silence for a few minutes, Albus lost in thought, Minerva watching him closely. "Albus," she ventured at last, "what else is bothering you?"

Albus smiled ruefully. "You know me too well, Minerva," he observed.

"I've had nearly fifty years to learn," she replied with a gentle smile. "Now, out with it."

"In order to assure the extension of the marriage and child deadlines, and put our Minister off guard," he began slowly, "I had to make a rather large personal concession." He took a deep breath before continuing. "I myself agreed to abide by the original stipulations."

To be continued...

Part Two

Chapter 2 of 2

Minerva hears what Albus has to say.

It was a very good thing that this was a private breakfast meeting, because the look that Minerva was giving Albus now would have justifiably alarmed students and staff alike. As it was, her eyes had grown so wide that he idly wondered how they could possibly stay in their sockets. "What...how...?" she sputtered.

"He was working himself into a state about those who would try to wangle their way out of this," Albus began. "In particular, he was quite outdone with me, not only for asking him to reconsider a decree my words had inspired," here Albus paused to shake his head at the irony of it all before continuing, "but for never, in all my years of life, fathering any children myself, thus, and I quote, 'depriving the Wizarding World of my valuable genetic material', end quote."

"How deplorably...clinical," was Minerva's horrified assessment.

"Indeed," Albus concurred, "clinical and zealous. It was then that I realized that the only thing to do was offer myself up as an example, provided he extend the deadlines for everyone else."

"Who is the lucky lady?" Minerva asked, wondering why this question made her nervous.

"Lucky lady?" Albus looked puzzled.

"Surely you had someone in mind when you made your bargain with the Minister," Minerva reminded him none-too-patiently.

"Well yes, of course, but now that I've had time to calm down and think it through, I'm not at all certain that you'll agree," he admitted reluctantly, watching her very carefully as he did so.

"Why should my opinion matter?" Now it was Minerva's turn to be puzzled. "I assume you only plan to stay married until the decree is repealed, but even if you decided to

stick with it, whom you marry is no business of mine."

"Unless you're the one I'd like to marry," Albus replied softly.

"Well, in that case, it would..." she broke off to stare at him, her eyes growing wide once again. "Are you serious?"

"Of course I'm serious." He leaned forward and took her hand. "Who else could I ask?"

Minerva was rather pleased at this turn of events, a reaction that surprised her. In order to hide her smile she asked, "What makes you so certain that the Minister would find me biologically appropriate?"

"You're only seventy-five," he reasoned, beginning to look a bit perturbed. "I naturally assumed that you'd still be..."

"Oh I am," she assured him. "Poppy informed me just last week that I'm 'not out of the woods yet', though to hear her talk sometimes you'd think I had one foot in the grave."

"There are times when she can barely contain her surprise at finding me alive." Albus chuckled, then grew serious. "May I take the fact that you haven't hexed me as a sign that you might be amenable to being my wife?"

"Yes Albus," she replied with chuckle of her own. "If you're determined to take the fall for the Wizarding world again, I may as well keep you company."

Albus squeezed her hand gratefully. "Thank you, Minerva."

"Now, how do you want to handle the details?" Minerva's manner became brisk in an effort regain her equilibrium. "We have one month, correct?"

Albus nodded. "Not much time to plan a wedding, I'm afraid."

"Nonsense," came Minerva's crisp response. "All we need is an official, two witnesses, and as short an interval as possible between the moment we fill out the paperwork and the actual ceremony."

"Why?" Albus wanted to know.

"You're the great Albus Dumbledore," she reminded him wryly. "The very second the paperwork is filed the *Daily Prophet* will be all over it. The last thing we want to do is give them time to mobilize."

"You're not entirely unknown yourself, Minerva," he pointed out good-naturedly.

"All the more reason to defer the onslaught as long as possible, don't you think?" she queried with a raised eyebrow.

"Agreed," conceded Albus. "Will the last Saturday of the month work for you?"

Minerva nodded. "That will give us enough time to give the situation some plausibility."

"I don't follow you," Albus admitted, brow creased in confusion.

"I refuse to give 'Minister' Weasley the satisfaction of thinking that this is anything but a legitimate marriage," Minerva asserted. "Therefore, you and I need to make it look as though something is happening between us. Nothing drastic or inappropriate, mind you..."

"No snogging in the corridors, then?" Albus interrupted with his patented twinkle.

Minerva rolled her eyes and continued. "I was thinking of something along the lines of holding hands as we enter a room together. That alone would start certain tongues wagging."

"You do realize that half the staff already thinks we're sleeping together, don't you?" Albus asked her with a grin.

"Yes, but the other half thinks I'm sleeping with Severus," she shot back with an answering grin.

"Speaking of your love life," Albus began.

"I wasn't aware that I had one," Minerva commented dryly.

"What do you call all those Friday and Saturday evening dinner dates?" a mystified Albus wanted to know.

"Pure torture," Minerva answered him adroitly. At his disbelieving look, she continued. "These so-called 'dates' fall into two categories. The first is the Gilderoy Lockhart type, who seeks to show the lonely spinster schoolteacher heroine the joys of a night with a real man." She shot a weary look at Albus, who was starting to chortle. "I'm not joking," she admonished him before resuming. "The second is the worshipful admirer who is deeply interested in what it must be like to work so closely alongside the great Albus Dumbledore." She paused for a moment. "You know, I haven't had a genuine romantic prospect for over ten years."

"That's about how long it has been for me as well," Albus confided. "The only difference is that my 'dates' either can't get past who I am, or can't accept my close relationship with you."

Minerva shook her head and sighed. "It would appear that we have each been a significant part of the other's problem."

Albus echoed her sigh. "I'm sorry, Minerva."

"There's nothing to be sorry for," she reassured him. "Neither of us can do anything about who you are, and if your ladies have such jealous streaks then you're well rid of them."

"What about the Gilderoy Lockharts?" Albus was curious.

"Casually mentioning my riding crop collection usually puts them off quite effectively," she reported gleefully. "If not, then telling them about the partially transfigured handcuffs does the trick."

They both had a good laugh at that, after which Albus wondered, "What would I do without you, Minerva?"

"You'd manage," she answered him lightly, "though probably not as seamlessly as you do with me around."

"There is a chance you'll be spared all this," he told her. "Amelia said last night that she'd already been flooded with petitions from same sex couples. And the number of same sex marriages already on the books is certainly not trivial. It is conceivable that we'll have a new Minister in a month."

"Well, until that happens, we'll just have to bide our time," Minerva observed philosophically.

"So, shall we walk into the Great Hall hand-in-hand for lunch today?"

"Absolutely," Minerva agreed with a smile. "Let the gossip begin!"

To be continued...