

Toy Shopping

by Angharad

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note: For her birthday, Scattered Logic requested a conversation about anything between Albus and Minerva. Lest anyone credit me with undue creativity, portions of this story are based on a true incident.

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Albus Dumbledore was at a complete loss. The Greatest Wizard of the Modern Age had simply no idea how to proceed with the task he had set for himself. Usually, when faced with such a situation, he would consult with Minerva McGonagall, his partner in all things - all things, that is, except one. And therein lay the problem. For the first time in over forty years, neither of them was married or involved with anyone, and the Wizarding world was not in immediate danger of annihilation. The result of this unusual confluence of circumstances was that the latent attraction Albus had always felt towards Minerva was no longer latent. It was no coincidence that he used the cold plunge in his bathroom more frequently these days, particularly after any encounter with her that lasted more than ten minutes. To ask her opinion regarding the subject at hand would undoubtedly require him to immerse himself until he turned blue, a state that could hardly go unnoticed at dinner. No, he was going to have to wade through every page of this bloody thing until he found what he was looking for.

Albus' frustrated ruminations were interrupted by the sound of a slight intake of breath. Looking up, he beheld Minerva McGonagall herself, slightly flushed, but wearing the hint of a smile. "Is that the new *Toys for Titillation?*" She was peering at the open catalogue in front of him.

"Yes, but..." Albus was flushed now.

"I had no idea that you..." Minerva began.

"It's for a friend," Albus attempted, knowing as he uttered the words how lame they would sound.

"Anyone I know?" she queried with a wicked smile.

"As a matter of fact, yes." For a moment, Albus considered dropping the subject then and there. Upon further reflection, he decided that as long as he was in the water, he might as well swim. "When I stopped by The Burrow yesterday evening, Arthur was sitting at the kitchen table, attempting to fix a broken...marital aid," he explained. "Apparently it had been his and Molly's favorite for many years, but stopped working recently. He had already tried every repair spell known to wizardkind, and by the time I arrived he had taken the thing apart and was repeating the process on each of the pieces."

"Am I correct in assuming that he wasn't successful?" Minerva was chuckling now.

Albus nodded. "They were contemplating giving it a name and burying in the back garden when I left," he reported with a grin.

"So you've decided to buy them a new one for their anniversary?" Minerva quirked an eyebrow at him.

"Anonymously, of course," Albus confirmed. "The trouble is there are now so many of these sorts of devices on the market that I don't really know how to begin. I mean, look at this catalogue!" He indicated the large glossy semi-tome on his desk. "The array is positively dizzying!"

"Albus," Minerva asked suddenly, "do you remember what any of the pieces looked like?"

"Well," Albus answered slowly, "there were several rather long wobbly portions. I thought at the time that they looked a bit like parts of a tiny squid. Why do you ask?"

"Page sixty-nine," Minerva replied crisply.

"Beg pardon?"

"Page sixty-nine," she repeated.

Albus turned to the page in question – then stared up at his Deputy. "Are you sure?"

"It's the only one that would be a favorite of both his and hers, and has been around long enough to have provided years of faithful service," Minerva pointed out.

Albus read the description and examined the photograph carefully. "It does look like it could be what I saw," he conceded, "but the price makes me wonder how they could have ever..."

"It was an anonymous anniversary gift from a friend," Minerva interrupted, catching and holding his gaze.

"I see," he responded, his eyes never leaving hers. "The only question that remains is whether the rather extravagant claims on this page are to be believed. If they are, then such a device would render a partner quite superfluous."

"Oh, those claims are entirely accurate," Minerva informed him with a wicked smile. "Although, as with anything of that nature, it's more fun with two."

"You've piqued my curiosity," he remarked softly. "I'd very much like to see this item 'in action', as it were."

"And what if I were to call your bluff, and say that I'd be more than happy to share my toy with you?" Minerva's voice was just as soft as his.

"Then you'd find yourself with a very willing playmate."