

Divine Intervention

by Stefdarin

Albus needs a helping hand to overcome his wartime experience.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer

Our spirits by Thine advent here;

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night

And death's dark shadows put to flight"

December 25, 1945

Standing at the edge of the jagged cliff, the crisp morning wind whipping her hair from its tight bun, Minerva McGonagall closed her eyes and cocked her head to meet the wind head on. Her cheeks pinked from the frosty chill, she opened her eyes, gazing out at the white-capped waves crashing against the rocks below and gasped when the somber hues of evening gave way to the brilliant sun cresting on the horizon.

"It never ceases to be amazing, does it?"

Sucking in her breath, Minerva spun around, losing her balance when his voice interrupted her morning ritual. "Wh-who are you?" she rasped, managing to find purchase when a strong, warm hand clasped her arm. When she looked up, her eyes met a warm, brown gaze, slightly crinkled with age, surrounded by fluffy, white hair and capped with a smile that instantly brought a curve to her lips.

"Who I am is of no consequence to you, my dear. It is who I represent that matters," he chirped, watching her. "Let's just say I am the ghost of Christmas present, and I have come to give you a little direction."

"Direction? But I..."

"Tut, tut," he replied, thrusting his finger in front of her mouth.

Raising her eyebrows in disbelief, Minerva frowned and crossed her arms.

"Just give me a moment and all will be clear. There are greater things at work here, and He just felt that those involved needed just a tiny shove in the right direction." His smile widened, and he chuckled at her quizzical look. "I see you have no idea what I am talking about. I am sure you know why...or should I say, who...is responsible for the survival of wizarding kind and the end of the war? Someone you were rather fond of, I thought."

"You are talking about Albus," she whispered when he leaned away from her.

"Indeed, I am. And he needs you."

Turning away, she let out a lengthy breath. "He will never need me the way I long for him."

"Oh, but that is where you are wrong, my dear. But you will have to go to him to figure out how wrong you are. There *is* no other way."

Slowly, Minerva twisted around to look at him, and he beamed at her. "What do you mean, he needs me?"

Reaching out, the little man took her hand, squeezing it gently. "Do not question it, just go to him, and you will have your answer," he countered and faded from sight.

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In the stillness before dawn, Albus Dumbledore lay motionless on the hospital bed. Little by little, he gathered the strength to face another day. Opening his eyes, he squinted as pale light poured in through the window. He was drained: magically, physically, and emotionally. He should have been elated, but all he seemed able to feel was a sense of loss. Gellert, his friend so many years ago, had been taken alive; however, he was no longer the carefree boy Albus had known. In addition, so many others had lost their lives.

Slipping from the corner of his eye, a silent tear traveled to his pillow while a gentle breeze announced the soundless opening of the door. His eyes shifted to the woman framed there, and he felt his spirit lift slightly. Raising his hand in a nonchalant gesture, he rubbed his cheek to erase the evidence of his melancholy, but couldn't find the energy to smile at his visitor.

Their eyes settled on one another, never straying. Giving him an encouraging smile, she entered the room stiffly, as if she was unsure she should be there. Her raven hair was gathered softly behind her head, and a resolve settled over her as he watched her approach.

"This is an unexpected visit, Miss McGonagall," he croaked, finding speech difficult and draining even after months of recuperation.

"I needed to see you, Albus."

"And so, you have seen me, have you not?"

"They say you won't see anyone. Why?"

"Surely you have felt the need on more than one occasion to simply be alone."

Reaching out, she slipped her warm hand around his, squeezing tight. "Albus, you need to confide in some one. Tell me, you can confide in me."

Tugging his hand from hers, he shifted to face the wall. "Minerva... Go away," he whispered, shutting his eyes tight.

The silence that followed filled the room. After a moment, Minerva released a long breath, and her short, clipped strides crossed the room. The breeze of the door flowed over him again, quickly pursued by the soft scent of lavender and stillness.

That was the first of many visits from Minerva. She always came in the same way, at the same time; one could literally set a pocket-watch by her arrival. For the first seven days, Albus greeted Minerva the same, and it always ended with her leaving the room without another word and him feeling worse than he had before she came.

However, he soon realized another conundrum; the date never changed. One morning, he woke when a merry matron entered his room. Frowning, Albus asked, "What is the date today?"

"Why, it's Christmas! Surely you haven't forgotten! I didn't think you had anything wrong with your head," replied the plump nurse as she waved her wand, and his pillow fluffed instantly. "Though your demeanor could use a little pick-me-up." She leered at him, shoving him back into the pillow just a bit too roughly with another flick of her wand.

"I see nothing wrong with my demeanor. I have been the most docile of patients," Albus snapped, indignant.

"Well, that statement would be correct if that was what I was referring to." Resting her hands on her hips as she stood over him, she blew a chestnut curl out of her face.

Albus crossed his arms and peered at her nametag. "Then what in blazes are you referring to, Nurse... Sprig?"

"Every time she comes to see you. Even though she thinks you don't need her, even though she feels like you will never see her... even though she believes your feelings aren't the same, she comes anyway, and you treat her that way..."

"Wait! What? How..." His eyebrows rose into his hairline, and the pitch of his voice rose before he stopped to compose himself. "How do you know she comes to see me every day?"

Chuckling, her hazel eyes danced with mirth. "You will find that there is not much I do not know. Let's just say I have it on good authority that you should cut the lady a little slack. After all, she came when she was asked... when she did not truly have to. And you don't have to look very hard to see where her heart lies. The question is, how long is it going to take you to realize what is right in front of you?"

"My dear lady, normally I find puzzles intriguing. However, I find this roundabout information of yours rather annoying."

"Don't worry; you have plenty of time to get it right." She smirked.

"What does that mean?" he demanded. A lilting laugh met his bark when the nurse faded from his sight.

"Wait! Don't go; what do you mean?" he asked the empty room.

At that moment, the soft wind from the door hit him once more, announcing Minerva's presence. She hesitated at the door, and he frowned. Even when she had been his student, she had been vibrant and headstrong. This hesitation was so unlike her. The words of Nurse Sprig echoed in his head: *Even though she thinks you don't need her, she comes anyway.* He sighed, closing his eyes for a moment.

Opening them once more, he gazed at Minerva and gave her a small smile. "This is an unexpected surprise, Miss McGonagall. Won't you please come in, have a seat," he announced, gesturing toward the chair next to the bed.

Striding stiffly into the room, Minerva approached the bed, ringing a handkerchief in her hands. "I needed to see you, Albus," she croaked.

"And so, you are here. What is troubling you, my dear?" He noted her hands and the fact that she remained standing. "Is everything all right?"

Clenching her hands to steady their movement, Minerva perched on the edge of the seat. "Oh, Albus, it has nothing to do with me. I was concerned. They say you won't see anyone. Why?"

"Surely you have felt the need on more than one occasion to simply be alone. I am afraid I haven't quite felt myself lately."

Reaching out, she slipped her warm hand around his, squeezing tight. "Albus, if you need to confide in someone, you can confide in me."

A knot rose in his throat and something stirred in his chest when he looked at her hand enveloping his. Roughly, he cleared his throat. "I don't want to burden you with my demons, Minerva. But I am glad you came today. Thank you."

Nodding, Minerva rose from her seat and withdrew her hand from his. "You're welcome," she murmured and quietly left the room.

Albus stared after her for a long time. Her presence seemed to linger along with the scent of her perfume. Lavender would always remind him of her.

The following morning, Nurse Sprig was back. Albus woke to her joyful humming of *Jingle Bells*. "I don't suppose a patient needing sleep is part of your regimen, is it?"

She beamed at him. "Not when the patient is wallowing in self-pity and being a lay-a-bed, afraid to face the world again."

"For your information, I am ill. Why else would I be cooped up in a hospital, for Merlin's sake?"

Raising her eyebrow, she pursed her lips. "Because, dear fellow, the hospital gives you a buffer from the questions and obligations you constantly burden yourself with out there. You needed time to recuperate, but you have been here long enough. By the way, that was a much better start yesterday." Swishing her hand, his pillow fluffed when he leaned forward.

"You mean with Minerva, right?" He looked up at her like he had caught a prize.

"Time will tell, time will tell," she responded as his magazines straightened themselves, and a new water pitcher popped onto the bedside table.

"Oh, what is today?"

"Why, it's Christmas, of course. You haven't forgotten, have you? I didn't think there was anything wrong with your head!" she exclaimed, hands on hips.

"Christmas again?"

"Yes, it's Christmas. It comes every year, does it not? Though they say that time seems to pass more quickly with age, so I guess your proclamation would be correct." She bestowed him with a large smile, and he scowled back.

"No, no. I mean it is the same Christmas it was yesterday... and the day before... and last week!" he retorted.

"My, my, we are feisty this morning. I just hope you have as much life in you when your visitor arrives," she replied tartly and faded from sight.

"No...wait...come back, I didn't mean..." he stopped abruptly, realizing she wouldn't be back. At that moment, his door opened, the draft lifting the tendrils of his long, auburn hair. His gaze fell once more on Minerva's, and his heart sped up.

His cheeks were flushed slightly from his heightened emotion, but his lips curved up in greeting for the first time since this day had started. "Minerva! Come in, my dear," he called, ignoring her anxious stance.

She moved into the room hesitantly. A gentle smile graced her lips as she watched him sit up straighter in the bed. "Oh, Albus, I needed to see you."

Raising his eyebrows in question, he asked, "Is everything all right?"

"They say you won't see anyone. Why?"

"I must confess, Minerva, I needed to be alone. But I am glad you are here with me now."

"You are?" Her eyes looked bright.

Smiling back at her, he nodded. "Oh, yes, my dear, why wouldn't I be? You always were my favorite student." He looked back at her with something akin to reverence, then frowned when she looked away.

Clasping her hand, he tugged gently, causing her to look back at him, and her eyes filled with tears. "Something is wrong! Please, won't you sit down and tell me what it is?"

"I'm sorry, Albus, I thought... I need to go," she whispered, turning toward the door, the soles of her shoes clattering rapidly across the floor.

"No, Minerva, wait!" But his words reverberated against the closed door, and once more, the lavender-filled breeze hit him in the face. Suddenly, his head jerked up as Nurse Sprig's words hit home: *Even though she believes your feelings aren't the same...* Sucking in his breath, Albus covered his face with his hands. *I have been a fool!*

"You could say that again," Nurse Sprig replied sharply, and Albus looked up.

"You! You're the one who started this whole problem to begin with!" Albus pointed at her, rising up in the bed.

"Now, now, let's not go around pointing fingers when you know you are the reason we are all here."

"Me?"

"A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject... though I might say this one is leaning toward lunatic," she mumbled under her breath.

"What did you say?" Albus leaned toward her, his anger rising more at the situation than at her.

Raising her gaze to his, Nurse Sprig jabbed her finger at his chest. "Look, I think you have been here, feeling sorry for yourself, long enough. One would think that you would be overjoyed now that the war has ended and you can get back to life. Now, where is the Albus Dumbledore we all know? And don't you dare tell me he was lost in the battle of wits with a madman!"

Sighing, Albus studied the blanket. "I don't know if I can find him again; so much has changed, happened. I'm not sure where to start," he whispered, looking up at her slowly, tears threatening to spill.

Reaching out, she covered his heart and added, "How about right here? Everything... everyone you need will come to you today. Just follow your heart, and you will find the way."

"Um, I'm sorry. I don't know your first name..."

A smile slowly covered her face. "It's Holly."

Laughing for the first time in months, Albus grinned broadly. "Thank you, Holly. I owe you a great deal."

"Oh, don't be silly. I am just the messenger." She beamed at him. "Besides, it isn't often I get to be Eros," she quipped and faded from sight.

Before Albus could ponder Holly's strange departure, the door swung open. Minerva stood there a moment as if weighing whether she should enter. "Minerva, my dear!

Happy Christmas! I am so delighted to see you," Albus declared with joy. "Won't you come in?"

A smile crept over her face, and she looked a bit baffled when she sat down next to him. "Albus, I needed to see you. So many have said you won't see anyone, but you look like yourself to me." She raised a quizzical eyebrow.

Chuckling, Albus grasped her hand and squeezed it. "Oh, Minerva, it's true, all of it. I haven't quite been myself since dueling Grindelwald, and I have needed to be alone, but I am almost ready to face the world once more."

"Almost ready? Why only almost?"

"Because there is someone I need first, someone who knows me better than anyone else. Someone who has been there for me, and someone I have realized I care a great deal about," he told her seriously.

Dull pain entered her eyes, and she lowered her head. "I see. I am very happy for you, Albus." She swallowed. "May I ask who...?"

Reaching out, he lifted her face with his finger. "Why, Minerva, don't you know?" He inquired, staring at her.

Her gaze shifted over his face, studying him. His eyes twinkled, and he caressed her cheek lightly, pulling her closer. Suddenly, she sucked in her breath.

"B-but I..." Leaning in, he claimed her lips when she paused and slipped his hand up around her neck, tugging her deeper into the kiss.

Feeling her resistance collapse, he pulled her onto the bed. There, her arms encircled him, giving into his ardor fully.

"Oh, Albus, how I love you," she breathed when they finally emerged from their kiss. "I have been very worried about you."

Sighing, he pulled her closer. "So have I. And I am sorry..."

"Sorry? For what?" She leaned back to look at him.

"A great many things, but we will discuss that later. For now, I am simply glad that you are here and that you love me in return." He smiled, leaning up for another kiss.

Beaming back, she bent once more to receive his kiss.

From the doorway, two familiar forms watched the happy couple. "Finally!" Holly exclaimed, crossing her arms.

"I couldn't agree with you more, my dear," the little man concurred, chuckling. "Now, I believe we have a date with destiny." He held out his arm.

"Oh, you're right. Why, thank you!" She smiled, taking his offered arm, and they faded from sight.

*End (Or is it just the beginning?)=0)*

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**A/N:** This story was written for my dear friend, MMADfan, for the Charming Roots Christmas Exchange, 2009. The beginning quote is from the Christmas carol: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Happy New Year, MMADfan!

**\*\*My heartfelt thanks go out to ladyinthecloak and Sempra for their awesome beta work. You gals rock!\*\***