

Hogwarts Owls

by HogwartsDuo

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until Harry James Potter turned 11 years old!

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Chapter 1 of 1

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years old!

It was the end of July, and the summer holiday was drawing to a close faster than Minerva McGonagall would have liked. She and Albus were planning to take one last little overnight trip to their cottage before the start of term, but there were still so many things to do before they could leave. She silently wondered if they'd actually make their annual trip this year. Of course, she'd had that same thought every year, and like all the others, she doubted she would be disappointed in the outcome.

As she sat at her desk revising her notes for her first-year Transfiguration class, a rather large tome came floating through the door towards her. A smile curled about her lips as she quickly made space for it to gently glide down onto her oak desk with a soft thud. This was by far her favorite task of the summer, and this year it was even more special.

The book in question was rather large with a weathered-looking leather binding, but the crest on the top of the book and the golden lettering, both on the cover and the spine of the book, looked brand new.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Student Registry

Draco Dormiens Nunquam Titillandus

Minerva ran her hand reverently over the top of the book as she did every time the book appeared. There was so much history, so many famous and even some infamous names, recorded in this book that it gave her a rush of emotions each time the book presented itself to her. This was certainly one part of her job that she truly relished. She was usually the first contact some children had with the magical world, and that thought alone made her smile.

Before she even opened the book, Minerva Summoned her new bottle of green ink and a quill from the cabinet, then took out a large stack of parchment papers and the wax and seal from her desk drawer. In preparation for the task at hand, she made certain she had everything she needed, including the list of required materials for each class and year of study, then carefully opened the book.

She didn't know why she did it, but she always took a moment to look at Albus' name in the book. It glowed a deep shade of scarlet, had his Sorting year listed, as well as the years he taught classes, served as Deputy Headmaster, and then served as Headmaster. Her finger danced lightly over his name, and she smiled. Next, she would look at her own name in the book, pausing to take note of the same scarlet glow, her Sorting year, and her status as Transfiguration teacher and Deputy Headmistress. A bit of foolishness, she supposed, but she only saw the book a handful of times each year, and while nothing ever changed, she realized it was also something few witches and wizards ever saw.

Each witch or wizard who had ever been at Hogwarts had a listing in the book. Their names had been recorded on the day of their birth, and their names remained written in black ink until their Sorting day. As soon as the Sorting Hat announced their House, the color of the ink would magically change to the corresponding House color: scarlet, green, yellow, or blue. It was certainly a unique bit of magic, ancient magic, that maintained the book, hence the reason for the gentleness with which it was handled.

But enough with the nostalgia. Minerva shook her head and directed her attention towards the set of names that demanded her attention. She decided she would start with the seventh-year requirements and work her way backwards towards the first-years and the main reason for the appearance of the book.

Abbott, Bones, Goyle, Crabbe, another Weasley, Bulstrode, Finnegan, Malfoy, Longbottom ... Harry James Potter. It was here that Minerva stopped reading and her eyebrow arched almost to her hairline. She secretly hoped he would be Sorted into Gryffindor, but she realized she had no control over such matters. Regardless, she would look after him and do as much as possible to help him adjust to life at Hogwarts. It was the least she could do for Lily and James.

Two hours had ticked by, and Minerva barely noticed. She became so engrossed in sending out the letters, she completely missed tea with Albus and failed to notice him watching her from the doorway of her office.

"Ah, the Hogwarts letters," he said softly so he didn't startle her. "I'd recognize that well-worn book anywhere, not to mention the look of concentration on your face." He chuckled to himself.

Minerva looked up after sealing yet another letter and addressing it. She arched her back and rolled her shoulders, taking a deep breath and smiling. "Quite an interesting lot this year. Another Weasley, Malfoy's son, Augusta's grandson Neville, not to mention Harry," she answered with a bit of tenderness in her voice. "You know as well as I do that his aunt and uncle aren't going to make this easy on him."

Albus took a seat directly in front of her desk, stretching his long legs out in front of him and leaning back, looking completely relaxed. "Perhaps not, but he belongs here with us now. It is time he joined the magical world and learned the skills he will need in life."

Minerva paused before pursuing her next train of thought. "What if I personally delivered the letter to him? I could explain to his guardians about Hogwarts, the procedures, Diagon Alley ... everything they would need to know to make a smooth transition for Harry."

Albus was already shaking his head before she finished her sentence. "Not yet. I believe we should treat them, and Harry, as we would any other student." He held up his hand. "Yes, I know he's not just any other student, but we mustn't give the impression that we are playing favorites. No, let's start with the official Hogwarts acceptance letter, and we will deal with any problems as they arise."

And so it was. Minerva addressed her final letter to:

Mr. H. Potter

The Cupboard Under the Stairs

4 Privet Drive

Little Whinging

Surrey

Cupboard under the stairs, indeed, she muttered to herself. A horrid place for someone to live, but then again, he lived with horrid relatives. Her mind went back to the day she'd spent observing them, the day Harry had been left on their doorstep. She was certain that this wasn't going to be easy, but it would be worth every ounce of energy she expended to see that Harry James Potter arrived at Hogwarts on the appointed day, if for no other reason than to give him a chance at a normal life away from his aunt, uncle, and cousin.

With the letters set to be delivered by school owls the following day and her desk cleared, Minerva spent a rather enjoyable evening with Albus. She woke the next morning feeling well rested and quite happy, no doubt thanks to Albus' attentions to her every need, even some she hadn't even realized. She rolled over and smiled. His long hair was a tangled mess in some places, thanks to their late-night activities. She would take great care in untangling the locks of his white hair, but not before she got them a little more tangled.

Minerva was feeling rather frisky this morning, and she couldn't help it. It was summer, and she had Albus mostly to herself. Her work was completed, which meant she would have time for some leisure reading, and Harry Potter would finally receive his Hogwarts letter today. She toyed briefly with the idea of Transfiguring into her Animagus form and sitting beneath the window of 4 Privet Drive just to hear the Dursleys' shrill comments and exclamations. But she knew that Albus would not approve, so she banished that thought, and all others, from her mind as she slowly began to seduce her beloved until he was fully awake in every way.

Hours later, while Albus worked steadily on a few things at his desk, Minerva sat on the sofa with her feet tucked beneath her and a Muggle book in her hand. She was well into the plot of the book when she noticed a most peculiar thing. The Hogwarts Registry was hovering just in front of her, but for how long it had been there, she couldn't say.

"Albus ..."

"Hmm?" he asked, not bothering to look up from the parchments spread out across his desk.

"Albus, look!" She marked her page in her book and studied the large tome hovering just in front of her. "What would cause the book to reappear?"

His attention finally captured, he looked up and was just as surprised as Minerva had been a moment earlier. "Peculiar," he announced, rounding the desk and slowly approaching the book. He reached out and gently grasped it in his hands before taking a seat next to Minerva on the sofa. As he placed the book on his lap, the worn cover opened on its own, and the pages began to move at a rapid pace, as if being blown by a strong wind. It stopped on the page that bore Harry Potter's name, which was now glowing.

"It would appear that something is amiss with Harry's letter, my dear. His name doesn't have a mark beside it to indicate that it was accepted. It would seem he did not properly receive the invitation."

Minerva sighed. "I knew I should have taken his letter personally or at least been nearby when it was delivered," she grumbled. "Well, no matter. He'll get it today! I'll see to that."

He placed his hand on her arm, stilling her as she tried to rise from her seat. "Let's wait until the end of the day and see if anything changes in the book. Perhaps Petunia and Vernon are trying to decide what to do and will make the correct decision. If, by the time we're ready to retire for the evening, the markings in the book have not altered, we will draft another letter and send it tomorrow."

Periodically during the day, Minerva checked the book, growing more and more disgruntled when nothing had changed. She had suspected that the Muggles would try to keep Harry from his education. She'd seen and heard the way they treated him, so why would they care about his magical learning? When she checked the book after dinner, she did note one slight alteration in the book ... his address.

"Seems they're a bit leery of what might happen," Minerva remarked as Albus walked into the room while brushing his teeth.

Albus muttered something that only Minerva could understand. Years of living with and loving this man had taught her how to understand even his mumblings. "They've

moved him from the cupboard to the smallest bedroom at the house," she replied to his question. "Very well, then. I'll send him another letter in the morning, and we'll see how they deal with us then."

The next day found Minerva up much earlier than usual and seated at her desk with a quill in her hand. She had just finished signing her name to the acceptance letter when Albus appeared behind her looking very disheveled.

"My dear, surely the letter can wait until a decent hour of the morning," he said just before he yawned tiredly. A small smile touched his lips as he moved forward and wrapped his arms around her shoulders from behind. "The sun has not even made an appearance yet."

Minerva sighed and laid her head against him. "I simply couldn't sleep. The thought that the Dursleys did not give Harry his letter has upset me. I suppose I should be grateful that they moved him to a bedroom, even if it is the smallest one, and I'm thinking the sooner he receives his letter, the sooner he'll be able to leave those horrid people. A bit silly I know, but there it is." Minerva looked at the letter and shook her head. "When I woke up this morning it was the first thing that popped into my head, and I quickly realized I would never get back to sleep until I'd done something about it. So here I am. Once I was finished, I promise I was going to return to you."

Albus kissed the top of her head, another yawn making an appearance. "You do not need to explain it to me. One of the many things I love about you is how utterly devoted you are to those you care about, including our wonderful students, or soon-to-be students. Besides, I cannot argue with such faultless logic. If it will allow your mind some ease, then you should most certainly finish the letter as soon as you would like. And I must admit, I'm rather anxious to see Harry get his letter as well." Albus removed his arms and squeezed her shoulder before stepping away. "I'll await you in bed."

Minerva twisted in her chair so she could watch Albus, who was obviously still very sleepy. He slowly made his way out of the room, but not before turning to give her one last smile. She smiled in return and kept her eyes on him until he was out of sight. She did so adore her husband. Even when he didn't agree with her or understand her, he always made an effort to support her in any way he could, and who could ask for more?

With Albus on his way back to bed, Minerva turned her attention to the letter. It took only minutes for her to have it addressed and ready to send. She smiled at the new address. How she would love to see the look on the Dursleys' faces when they caught sight of it. They might be familiar with the wizarding world, but she was sure they didn't know any of the intricacies of it. She hoped they'd be very surprised to see how much she—or rather, Hogwarts—knew, and maybe it would even encourage them to do the right thing and give Harry his letter.

She called a house-elf and gave the letter to her so it could be inserted into the Muggle post. Afterwards, she stretched and worked out the kinks that were developing in her back. She walked over to the window, placing a hand on the cool glass, and looked upon the grounds. It was certainly very dark outside. She really had pulled herself out of bed early, and unfortunately she was more awake than she'd like. It was going to be a very long day. Still, with Albus as company, she was sure it would pass quickly.

Looking at the shadowed grounds of Hogwarts, Minerva had an idea. It had been a long time since they'd done it, but maybe Albus could be convinced to take a leisurely stroll around the lake while the sun was rising. She could have the elves make them a heartier breakfast than usual, since they would probably be quite famished when they returned. With a bounce in her step, Minerva wound her way to their bedroom, ready to share her ideas.

"Albus, I was just thinking that ..."

Minerva stopped mid-step and took in the view before her. Albus was fast asleep in their bed, his head resting on the corner of her pillow. With a loving smile she quietly walked forward and pulled the covers up to his shoulders. Her morning would obviously not be going according to plan, but as she looked upon the serene expression on her husband's face, she realized she didn't really care. Picking up the book she was currently reading, and which had been interrupted the night before, Minerva made her way out to the sitting room and curled up in her favorite chair.

It was many, many hours later that Minerva found herself in the same position, her book very nearly finished and taking all of her attention. It had been a long day, but a good one. Albus had woken up over two hours after Minerva had found him asleep in their bed, and he'd insisted on making up for his inattention. He had escorted her on a walk around the lake after he'd eaten breakfast, then they'd gone to Diagon Alley to pick up some odds and ends. Minerva had returned home with a new dress, something pretty she'd seen displayed in a window. Albus had insisted she get it, and she'd liked it enough that she hadn't argued much about the ridiculous price the shop was charging. They'd dined while they were out, and it was late afternoon by the time they'd returned to the castle. Minerva had intended to talk Albus into a game of chess, but somehow they'd ended up in bed together, the results of which had caused both of them to fall asleep.

Minerva had woken after Albus, and she found him answering some letters that had come in while they'd been away. Kissing Albus on his cheek, she resumed her book while waiting for him to finish. It didn't take him long and they were soon cuddled together on the sofa, talking about the coming term. It was Minerva who first brought up the letter.

"Have you noticed that the registry hasn't appeared?" Minerva asked Albus after they'd finished discussing the Quidditch teams and what positions would need to be filled. "It's later than it was yesterday when it showed up."

"Why, you're right," Albus exclaimed. "I believe that's a good sign for Harry's letter."

"Yes, perhaps you were right and the Dursleys did do the right thing ... though it's hard to believe."

Albus chuckled and shook his head. "They are not kind people, but I felt it in our best interests to give them a chance to do right by Harry."

Minerva leaned forward and kissed her sweetheart on the tip of his crooked nose. "You give many people more credit than they deserve, but I have to say that your trust often causes them to better themselves. You are a great man."

Albus was going to respond but didn't have a chance as they were interrupted by the arrival of the Hogwarts registry floating into the room and stopping in front of them. Minerva's mouth opened and closed several times before she managed to get anything out. "I can't believe ... of all the nerve ... horrid Muggles ... Albus, I am definitely going to march directly into their house tomorrow and give them a piece of my mind ... and Harry's letter, too!"

Minerva grabbed the book, and it flipped open to Harry's name, as it had the day before. There was no mark indicating he'd received his letter, though the address was the same. She put the book down gently and then stood and started pacing. She was upset that the letter had again remained unopened. What were they thinking? Did they believe that if they ignored the letter that she'd stop sending them? Well, they couldn't be more wrong.

The whole time she paced, Albus kept his eyes on her but he didn't say anything. Minerva finally sat down and turned to him. "I've changed my mind."

"About confronting the Dursleys?" he inquired.

"Yes," Minerva said. "I have another plan."

Minerva could tell Albus wanted to ask, but he didn't. He simply leaned over and kissed her and told her that it was in her hands and he would not interfere with a deputy who was more than capable of dealing with the situation. Minerva hugged him and then told him she'd meet him for dinner in a half hour, but she had a letter to attend to first. And with that, she went to her office and took out her favorite green ink and wrote three letters for Harry. If they wouldn't open one, then perhaps three would make them realize she was serious. And if that didn't work, well, the more the merrier, as the saying went.

With each passing day, Minerva's fury grew. She was sorely tempted to take her own advice and hand deliver the letter to Harry, even if she had to catch him alone on one of the rare occasions he was allowed outside of his bedroom. But something in the back of her mind kept rushing to the forefront, and it sounded exactly like Albus' voice. *"I felt it in our best interests to give them a chance to do right by Harry."* She sighed, knowing Albus was usually right on such matters.

So here she sat at her desk, well past midnight, staring at the Hogwarts registry. Nothing had changed, and she'd looked at the book more in the last few days than she had in decades of working at Hogwarts. If the blasted Muggles wanted to play games, Minerva McGonagall, Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, would give them a taste of their own so-called medicine.

Earlier that day, Minerva had contacted Arabella Figg and asked her if she'd seen or heard any odd occurrences from the Dursley household over the last few days. Arabella had told her of the numerous owls that had been seen in and around Little Whinging, and especially at 4 Privet Drive, adding that she assumed it had something to do with Harry turning eleven years old and preparing for Hogwarts. She laughed as she described Vernon Dursley's face as he cautiously stepped out of his house every morning and darted for his car. But the most crucial bit of information she had given Minerva was that she'd heard from the postman that the crazy man living on a nearby street had nailed up the mail slot and now he had no idea how he would be delivering their post the following day. She laughed, knowing there could only have been one deranged man in the area, since, following the arrival of all the owls, she'd spent the last few mornings watching the Dursley house.

Minerva smiled as she recalled Arabella's snicker when Minerva promised to make Vernon Dursley—and Petunia, for that matter—rue the day they had denied Harry his acceptance letter to Hogwarts. It was with great determination and a bit of cunning that she planned her next move. They would receive no less than twelve letters on Friday morning, and if the silly Dursleys thought that a boarded-up mail slot was going to keep her from seeing that Harry James Potter received his Hogwarts letter, they had another thing coming.

She put the finishing touches on the letters and sent them to her house-elf so she could take the appropriate action, then she replaced her ink and quill in the cupboard before slipping into the darkened bedroom. Albus had gone to bed earlier with a headache and was facing her side of the bed, his back to the door and his head resting on her pillow. She tiptoed further into the room, hung her dressing gown on the post of the bed, and eased her slippers off her feet. Just as she pulled back the covers to slip into the bed beside him, he spoke, causing her to gasp and clutch her chest.

"I wondered if you were meeting your new boyfriend this evening, since you weren't joining me in our big bed. Didn't even check on me, knowing I was suffering terribly with a headache," he teased as he opened his arms to her while trying to sound offended.

"No, apparently he wasn't feeling well this evening, so I thought I'd give him a night off," she answered sarcastically, with a small smile curling about her lips. "Besides, I told you that drinking too much butterbeer with that rich cake and then following all of that with those peppermint pillows was a bad idea. I'm surprised you don't have a stomach ache to go along with that sugar rush you're calling a headache." She kissed him softly on the lips, noting how they tasted still of peppermint and buttery chocolate, and smoothed back the hair from his face. "Does it still hurt?" she asked. There was no longer the hint of teasing in her voice, only love and concern.

"A little, but it's starting to wear off. I'm sure once you're settled with me, I'll be able to sleep better, and it'll be gone by tomorrow." He pulled the blanket up around her as she snuggled into his side. "See, I'm feeling even better than I was five minutes ago."

She smacked his stomach playfully, momentarily forgetting everything he'd eaten that evening after their supper. She soothed it with her fingertips and brushed her lips against his chest. "I have devised a plan for the Dursleys ... with Arabella's help, of course," she announced a few moments later.

"That's nice, love," he mumbled, already drifting back to sleep. Minerva smiled at her sweet husband. "Wait ...what did you just say?" he asked, shifting so he could see her properly in the moonlight.

Minerva laughed. "I thought you were halfway asleep." She kissed his cheek and grinned. "Don't worry, sweetheart. It's nothing bad, but let's just say Vernon Dursley has pushed me too far. Arabella told me he'd nailed shut the mail slot and was causing the mailman all sorts of problems."

Albus chuckled. "I'm sure you've thought up something rather special for him. Let's hope, for his sake, that he doesn't push you any further." He kissed her cheek and drew her back into his arms. "I love you, Minerva. Sleep well."

The following day, Minerva had considerable trouble containing her curiosity and her anxiousness. She had promised Arabella Figg that she would contact her sometime in the evening to see how the Dursleys had reacted to the current influx of letters for Harry.

Minerva was not, however, surprised to find the book levitating over her desk when she and Albus returned from dinner in Hogsmeade. With more than a considerable amount of Floo powder in her hand, she tossed it into the fireplace and called out for the Squib whom she considered a good friend.

"Yes, Minerva. I'm here." The older lady and her cats appeared in front of the fireplace, and after a few pleasantries, Minerva asked about the day's events. "Oh, he was in quite a state. I believe he waited until after the post arrived before even going into work. And then that's when it all started." Minerva encouraged her to keep going. "You see, the postman couldn't get the letters through the letterbox, so he knocked on the door, but nobody answered. I was watching from a particularly secluded spot by the wall, you see. Anyway, when he got no answer at the door, he started pushing the letters beneath the door, slipped a few through the sides of the door, and then, after he left, a few owls swooped down and moved some of the letters to the downstairs bathroom window and pecked at the window until they fell through the cracks in the window frame. And then do you know what he did? He went around with wood and nails and boarded up all the cracks and crevices around the windows and doorframes. I tell you, Minerva, he's going mad."

Minerva couldn't help but laugh, though she was still not amused. "I'll bet his face was an ugly shade of purple by the time he was through huffing and puffing. Serves him right for denying Harry the chance at a somewhat normal life away from them. Could have saved himself all this trouble if he'd only given the lad his first letter." Arabella agreed and the two women chatted a bit longer. "Listen, what time does your milkman arrive on your street?" And with that question, the two began plotting.

When Albus returned to the study, he found Minerva sitting at the desk with parchments, green ink, her favorite quill, and using her wand to make copies of the original Hogwarts acceptance letter, then shrinking them into little bits of parchment the size of a Sickie. He did a quick count, and she was already up to six letters and was still shrinking them.

"Let's see how Petunia handles having the breakfast of her little lump of a lad disturbed! If it's a war they want, then they have no idea what they're in for now!"

"Minerva, perhaps it would be best if you sleep on this before you do anything else," Albus cautioned, giving her shoulders a little squeeze. "I know it's frustrating, but it's obvious they're struggling to come to terms with Harry's magical abilities. Perhaps I should pay them a visit soon."

"The time for visits is over, Albus. If that's the case, I should have delivered the first owl, or maybe even the second. Oh no, this time, they've gone too far. In the morning, Petunia Dursley will go to make breakfast for her son and husband. She'll find a letter in each egg she cracks and then if that doesn't work, they'll be receiving a special delivery on Sunday, though I hope it doesn't come to that." She stood and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "Part of me hopes the eggs don't do the trick. I might even transform and sit outside their window or visit Arabella just so I can hear the shrieks when the letters arrive, provided they're needed on Sunday."

Albus did not fail to notice the gleam in Minerva's eyes as she spoke, her words strong and sure and her posture ramrod straight. Part of him pitied the Dursleys, for they had riled the Scottish witch, and he'd been on the receiving end of that glare only a handful of times, but enough to leave a vivid impression in his memories. He might have forgotten his misdeeds which caused the anger, but he certainly remembered the wrath he had incurred and the pains it had taken him to set things right again.

Just as predicted, the letters in the eggs did little to persuade the horrid Muggles to let Harry open his letter. Harry had bumped into Arabella in the park and had happily told her how his aunt and uncle had practically pushed him out of the house that morning after his aunt had ruined the food processor by putting bits of paper inside. He neglected to say that the paper had been letters addressed to him, though Mrs. Figg knew exactly what they were and couldn't wait to get home to inform Minerva McGonagall that yet another of her tactics had failed.

Sunday morning arrived, and Albus had arranged for a quaint little breakfast with Minerva on the balcony. It had been a stressful week for her, and he had hoped to have a carefree day alone with her to get her mind off of Harry and the predicament they faced. He had to get Minerva out of the castle and away from the Hogwarts registry before it drove them both mad. So he'd planned a little breakfast and was going to suggest they take a trip into London for an evening concert in the park.

Minerva woke and reached over to find Albus' side of the bed empty. One glance at the clock told her she'd slept much later than she'd anticipated, though at least it was

Sunday. "Sunday," she thought to herself. "Time to get out of bed and to release the owls, providing nothing had changed," and she was quite certain it had not. Tying her dressing gown around her rather tightly, she paused long enough in the sitting room to kiss Albus on the lips and to tell him she would be back in a few minutes. Then she went into the little office they shared and closed the door.

With a few flicks of her wand, the necessary tools sprang from the cupboard and began working. Minerva smiled to herself. She was becoming quite adept at this spell, and it was taking almost no concentration at all to scribble out the letters and get them ready for the post, whether it be Owl Post or Muggle post. But this morning was a little different. She wasn't sending just one or two, nor even a dozen. No, this morning she was brewing up a little bit of fun. Bits of parchments swirled about the room, drying the ink, then folding themselves into little letters. Wax and seals pressed themselves together in a heated kiss, then slammed down on to the back of the envelope, leaving behind a Hogwarts crest as a product of their passions. Quills scratched furiously over the envelopes, trying to keep up with the hurried pace, and all the while Minerva was humming and moving her arms as if conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in one of Beethoven's finest and most moving pieces.

A few minutes later, the door opened and Minerva emerged, looking rather triumphant with a sparkle in her dark green eyes and her hair a little mussed and wild looking, as if she'd been in some furious windstorm.

"Minerva," he said very slowly, "what have you done?" Albus' eyebrows were raised as he asked his question. He could tell from the smirk on her face that she was quite pleased with herself.

"Something I should have done days ago," she said, sounding very innocent and sweet as she slipped onto his lap and gave him a very thorough good morning kiss. When they parted, she rested her head on his shoulder and let her lips graze the underside of his chin very softly. "About now," she started in a tone barely above a whisper, "the little family of horrors will be sitting down for a relaxing Sunday morning. Only it won't be that way for much longer." She nipped at a spot just below his ear. "Yes, about now a single letter will be zipping down their chimney, shortly followed by at least forty more. And did I mention that I put a little more zing into them so they won't simply float into the room? Oh no. Petunia will be lucky if all the vases and photo frames in her house survive without being shattered to bits. And if a few of the letters happen to hit Vernon in some rather delicate places, well all the better for Harry," she finished, drawing Albus' earlobe into her warm mouth and giving it a gentle tug.

"Minerva that's ..." A whole host of words came to his mind, though his thoughts were at war with his body. She had slipped her hand inside his pyjama top and was lightly scratching his chest as her lips and tongue worked to push him ever closer to the edge, all the while telling him of her latest attempt to save Harry. In the end, his body won over his head, and breakfast was long forgotten for the morning, along with the subject of Harry Potter and letters.

According to his plan, Albus had managed to persuade Minerva to join him on a visit to London for the summer concert in the park. They'd had the elves pack a nice picnic dinner and they'd joined the hundreds of others in the park that evening, enjoying the nice summer weather, the excellent music, and the delicious food. After the concert had ended, they'd walked hand in hand along the Thames before Disapparating home under the blanket of stars. They'd even been so distracted with each other that the book lay forgotten on Minerva's desk, though it would be there waiting for her on Monday morning.

As had become her routine, Minerva rose a little earlier than Albus so she could check the status of the book, always hoping for a change and expecting none. She was shocked to see that the address for the family had suddenly changed. Instead of it being 4 Privet Drive, the book now listed Harry's location as:

Room 17

Railview Hotel

Cokeworth

Minerva gave something of a snort and gritted her teeth. "So, they think they can run and hide from Harry's destiny? Let's see how they explain this one." With a few flicks of her wand, dozens of quills began scratching furiously across bits of parchment, and wax seals put the finishing touches on the backs of over a hundred envelopes. Harry's birthday was tomorrow, and she would get him his letter or die trying. By the time she slipped back into bed with Albus, she had managed to calm her nerves and her magic and send all those little letters on their way to an unsuspecting hotel manager, who would no doubt be just as surprised as one stout-faced, arrogant, ignorant Vernon Dursley.

Minerva found herself relaxing into sleep much faster than she'd thought would be possible. All the early mornings she'd had of late were obviously taking more of a toll than she'd thought they were. Albus' steady, deep breathing and warmth were comforting and lulled her back to her dreams within minutes of her head hitting the pillow. And still, her last thought was of Harry, his letter, and the Dursleys.

When she wakened hours later, she found a breakfast laid out for her, kept warm and fresh by magic, but Albus was nowhere in sight. She ate and dressed quickly and went in search of her husband. It did not take her long as he was settled behind his desk, his quill scratching against a piece of crisp parchment.

"Ah, you're up," Albus said when he caught sight of her.

Minerva smiled and walked up to his desk, leaning over until they were able to share their morning kiss. "I'm sorry you had to eat without me."

Albus waved her concerns away with a sweep of his hand. "It was more important that you get some rest. Besides, I had some work to do." A look of worry crossed his features, but disappeared when he smiled a moment later. "I take it you have already addressed Harry's letter, or perhaps I should say 'letters,' for today."

Minerva grinned and sat down so she could tell Albus of what she planned for today's surprise. She finished her story by telling him she was determined that Harry receive his letter by the end of his birthday tomorrow. Though she had no idea what she would do should the Dursleys choose to ignore her attempt today. Surely they would have figured out by now that she would find them wherever they went and would not give up. It was truly unbelievable how much the Dursleys had already gone through to avoid giving their nephew a simple letter.

In fact, she ought to decide on her course of action should the Dursleys destroy all the letters from today. Based on her past week of experience, they would indeed keep it from him, and they would probably continue to do so until they were forced to confront the issue. Minerva certainly felt she was up to the task. She would love to give Vernon and Petunia a piece of her mind. She could go tonight, after she was sure they had not given him a letter from today, or perhaps first thing in the morning, interrupting their breakfast. Just picturing herself charging into whatever hovel they'd decided to hide themselves in and handing Harry his letter herself made her heart beat faster and gave her a surge of adrenaline. And should they give her any issues, why, Vernon might find it instructive to spend some time as a rat, a creature closer to his true nature.

"Are you okay, my dear?" Albus asked quietly.

Minerva blinked a couple of times to clear her head. She looked up to see Albus watching her intently. She obviously had lost track of herself for a moment. "Yes, I'm fine. Why do you ask?"

"When you didn't answer my question, I thought perhaps I'd upset you."

Minerva smiled and shook her head. "No, not at all. I just didn't hear you. I guess I was lost in my own thoughts."

Albus leaned back and his expression softened. "I'm quite familiar with that habit. I was just wondering if you would have time for this barmy old wizard today. I have a few ideas in mind of how we could spend our time—after our Hogwarts duties are finished, of course."

"I always have time for you," Minerva said with a laugh. "I hope your plans involve just the two of us, preferably somewhere secluded."

"I think I can make that happen," Albus responded, wriggling his eyebrows at her.

They both were laughing when the door to Albus' office opened to admit the enormous bulk of Hagrid.

"Hello, Professors," he said, his black eyes crinkling in a smile.

"Hagrid, so nice to see you," Albus exclaimed, rising from his desk. "I'm glad you could stop by so quickly."

"Oh, was nothin', Headmaster. Why, I was just on me way back from the forest when yer note reached me. What can I do fer yeh?"

Minerva's fondness for Rubeus had grown over the years, and it was always a pleasure to see him. The half-giant always seemed to have a smile for everyone he met, though he could appear formidable if he became cross, usually with someone with a careless word for one of his precious animals. His size and general appearance were a great deal of it, and, of course, his immense strength helped as well. However, he was a gentleman at heart, if lacking some of the knowledge that went along with such chivalry. Again becoming lost in her thoughts, Minerva missed most of Albus' conversation with Hagrid, but mention of a vault at Gringotts brought her attention into focus.

"... and this letter will allow you to retrieve the package from the vault. It's vital that it be picked up tomorrow, Hagrid. I am sure I do not need to tell you how important completely secrecy is for your errand."

"Yeh can count on me, Headmaster."

Hagrid took the letter and made his farewells. When the door had closed behind him, Minerva turned to Albus and waited.

"I've had word that there will be an attempt to take the stone."

Minerva gasped and stood from her chair. "But who would dare try to steal from Gringotts?"

"You know who I think is behind it, though I have no proof. We'll need to put the precautions in place that we discussed. You've talked to everyone involved?"

"Of course, and it's all settled. We just need to set a date, and everyone will be here."

Albus nodded and smiled, though it was grim. "Good."

"But surely they won't succeed," Minerva said, not quite believing that anyone would break into Gringotts, and certainly not successfully.

"I'm not willing to take that chance, and there is no safer place than Hogwarts. Nicholas and Perenelle are counting on us." Albus moved around his desk to take Minerva's hands into his own. "Besides, the most brilliant and talented witch alive came up with a way to protect it that is unequal to anything else available, even Gringotts."

Minerva smiled up into her husband's steady gaze. "Let's hope you are right."

It wasn't until after her work was finished for the day, and Minerva had joined Albus for a late lunch, that she remembered the Dursleys. Her anger at them renewed when she checked the book after their meal and realized that Harry still had not read his letter, and worse, there was no address by his name. They had to be moving him again and Minerva couldn't decide whether to be surprised or not by their stupidity.

"Minerva?" Albus' call brought Minerva out of her thoughts.

"In here," she called back.

Albus appeared in the doorway. "There you are. I've been thinking about your request earlier today, and I know we are planning to go before the term starts, but how would you like to go to our cottage for the evening? I think we could both use a night away, if your letters for Harry tomorrow are already arranged, of course."

Minerva sighed with pleasure at the thought. An evening at their cottage sounded wonderful. A place where work wasn't allowed and where their whole reason for being was centered on each other. Where Vernon Dursley, letters, and even the philosopher's stone would cease to exist. Just one night of pure bliss. Suddenly Minerva's whole being couldn't imagine wanting anything more. There was just one problem—her responsibility to Harry Potter.

Minerva didn't respond right away, and Albus sensed, as he always did, that she needed a few minutes before answering. He told her to take her time and let him know when she was ready. She didn't really see him leave as she was wrapped up in her own thoughts. She already knew her answer to him, but she had a problem to solve first.

With a deep breath, she went to stand by the window to contemplate what to do. Looking out at the beauty before her always seemed to calm her and help her to think more clearly. She was now faced with needing to make a decision about how to handle tomorrow. She wanted to march in herself and take care of the great loud named Vernon Dursley; however, she much preferred the idea of spending that time and energy in her husband's arms instead.

Something—or rather, *someone*—she realized as she focused her attention, moved on the grass far below. In the distance, she saw Hagrid skirting the woods with Fang following close behind. She smiled as she saw him reach down and pat the large dog's head. Years ago, she had doubted Albus' trust in the giant, but now she had no doubts at all that he could handle any task set forth for him, even those of a delicate nature. She'd not had any reservations about him retrieving the stone when Albus had set him the mission this afternoon. Not many wizards would mess with Rubeus Hagrid.

Minerva's back straightened, and she reached out and touched the glass. "And if a wizard wouldn't dare threaten Hagrid, then a horrible, nasty, despicable Muggle like Vernon Dursley wouldn't stand a chance."

"Did you say something, Minerva?" Albus asked from the other room.

Minerva's smile was radiant as she hurried from the room and went over to her surprised husband and kissed him soundly on his parted lips. "Oh, Albus, I think an evening at the cottage is the best idea you've had in a long time."

"It is?" he asked, confusion evident in his voice.

"Definitely!" Minerva hugged him and then hurried off to their study. She had a final letter to write.

A few minutes later, she had the sealed envelope in her hand. All it needed was an address, which she'd have sooner or later. She'd need to speak to Hagrid, of course, about the details, such as getting Harry into his Gringotts vault and helping the boy purchase his school supplies. She was sure he would love to help and would put his whole heart into the task once she explained what was going on. Rubeus had often mentioned Harry over the years, wondering how he was growing. It was perfect, and what a birthday present for Harry!

Minerva turned to leave the room and found Albus watching her. "Oh, Albus, I'm glad you're here. Would you mind telling me where I can find Harry Potter's Gringotts key?"

"It's in the box at the bottom of my wardrobe," Albus answered. "And may I ask why you need it?"

Minerva hurried to his wardrobe and took out the pretty wood box. It was where Albus kept those things that were most important to him, and was heavily warded against anyone's touch, other than his own and his wife's. It took her some time hunting inside of it to find the small gold key. "I'm going to send Hagrid with Harry's letter to be sure he receives it this time, and have him take the boy to do his school shopping as well. I'd love to be there to see Vernon and Petunia's faces when Hagrid bangs on their door." Minerva finally found the key and held it up in triumph. "But what I'd love even more is to be in your arms in our cottage, just the two of us."

She turned around to see Albus smiling at her, and the warmth in his gaze melted her heart. He took the few steps required to cross the distance between them kissed her

soundly and thoroughly. When he let her go, Minerva nearly stumbled on her feet.

"I love you," Albus whispered in her ear as he steadied her.

"And I love you," Minerva responded, her heart fluttering in her chest.

"Is there anything else you need from me?" Albus asked.

"I believe the key is all. I just need to add an address to the letter before finding Hagrid and giving him a full set of instructions, then I'll be ready to leave." Minerva smiled with the joy she felt as the weight of her responsibilities seemed to fall away.

"Then I'll go ahead and set up the arrangements for tonight ... including allowing owls to get through the wards. That way Hagrid can send us a note to let us know all went well."

Minerva's smile widened at her dear husband's thoughtfulness. "You know how to make a witch happy."

"Perhaps, but there's only one witch I care to make happy."

Minerva laughed. "Then you're doing an excellent job. Now let me finish up and find Hagrid so we can be off for our evening. I want to spend as much time as possible with you."

Many hours later, after a candlelit dinner, dancing barefoot on soft grass to familiar tunes, a bubble bath for two, and the current chess match they were playing, Minerva and Albus heard the scratching of an owl at the window. Minerva practically knocked over her chair in her excitement and threw open the window, scaring the owl with the missive to deliver. "So sorry," she said apologetically, giving the affronted creature a few more treats than she would normally. She tore open the note from Hagrid and read the words eagerly.

"Good news I hope," Albus inquired.

"Very good news," Minerva replied. "Harry has his letter and they'll be traveling to Diagon Alley in the morning."

Albus joined his wife at the window, his arms encircling her waist from behind. "It sounds like the Dursleys were no match for a determined Rubeus Hagrid."

"Oh, I'm going to enjoy hearing every last detail when we're back at the castle!" Minerva exclaimed as she turned in her husband's arms so she could face him.

"I believe I'll want to be in attendance at that meeting," Albus said, a twinkle in his bright blue eyes. "We can question him when he delivers the package to us."

Minerva grew serious and looked up at her dear husband. "It is going to be quite a year, isn't it?" she said.

"I do believe it will be," Albus replied. "But it hasn't started yet, and with a beautiful witch in my arms, I can think of many other things I'd rather be doing, and none of them include worrying about the coming term."

Albus pulled her closer and leaned down, kissing her until all she could think about was the taste and warmth of him. She had a feeling this would be a school year they'd never forget, but for the moment, it was all she could do to stay on her feet, and even that wasn't a problem for long.

The End!

A/N: If you've made it this far in the story, we'd like to thank you for taking the time to read our little adventure, and we hope you'll take another moment to let us know what you thought of it. Thank you!