

Lily Marlene

by diana_hawthorne

Who was Marlene McKinnon? An Auror, a member of the Order of the Phoenix, a powerful witch who was killed by Voldemort himself, along with her entire family. But before she was an Auror, before she joined the Order of the Phoenix, before she was married and had a child of her own, she was Lily Marlene McGonagall.

Prologue: 12 December 1975

Chapter 1 of 17

Who was Marlene McKinnon? An Auror, a member of the Order of the Phoenix, a powerful witch who was killed by Voldemort himself, along with her entire family. But before she was an Auror, before she joined the Order of the Phoenix, before she was married and had a child of her own, she was Lily Marlene McGonagall.

Beta thanks are necessary, but the name shall be held until the reveal.

The Dark Mark shone above a small cottage in Cramond, its eerie green light throwing the building into sharp relief. Two figures, one belonging to a tall man and the other to a slightly smaller woman, appeared suddenly on the edge of the property. The woman disappeared, and a cat ran into the house as fast as it could. The man had followed too, though not running quite as fast as his companion, but quickened his pace as he heard a heartbroken scream emanate from the cottage.

He found his companion tenderly cradling the body of a woman with rich auburn hair; and he watched her cry.

"She's dead, she's dead, my baby, my only child, she's dead," the woman moaned in grief, rocking the body gently in her arms. Her partner knelt down beside her, wrapping his arms around her as his tears joined hers. She turned a teary, broken-hearted gaze on him.

"How could they do this to her, Albus? How?" The man she had called Albus shook his head, wiping away the few tears that escaped. He stood and made his way upstairs.

As he expected, he saw the body of a man lying stretched out on the landing, obviously caught while rushing downstairs to see what had happened. He continued his way upstairs, pausing before entering the room whose door was ajar.

It was a child's room, decorated in blues and yellows. Numerous toys littered the ground, and books were overflowing from the too-full bookcase. Lying in the small bed was a young boy, no more than three years old. Albus walked up to him and took the boy's wrist between his long fingers, checking for a pulse. Nothing. He made his way downstairs again.

His companion was still sobbing over her daughter's body, and it took Albus quite some time to get her attention.

"Robert and Frederick are dead, as well," he told her sombrely. As much as he wanted to spare her the pain, he knew that he could not, but that did not stop his heart from aching as the woman let out another grieving wail.

"They cannot all be dead, Albus," she said. "They cannot all be dead. It is not fair!"

He picked her up from her spot on the floor, ignoring her protests and attempts to get out of his arms.

"You need to rest, Minerva," he told her. "You need to rest so you can be strong enough to handle the pain."

She burrowed her head into his chest, as though she tried to escape his words. He walked silently to the edge of the property, still holding her in his arms, and Apparated away.

Prompt 72: Life stories: JKR says she has reams of notes on the characters in the Potterverse (ex: Dean Thomas' father was a wizard who abandoned his family). Tell the life story of a character/creature/inanimate object, incorporating canon as much, or as little, as possible.

The Beginning: April 1945

Chapter 2 of 17

Events occurring two nights before Grindelwald's defeat have consequences for Minerva McGonagall.

A/N: I do not speak German, so that is why dialogue later in this chapter is in English.

Thirty years earlier April 1945

Hidden by the shadow of a rock overhang and by powerful invisibility spells, three tents, set up in a half-circle, waited for the dawn. One tent held Auror Alastor Moody; another housed Albus Dumbledore, the current Deputy Headmaster of Hogwarts and the former friend of Grindelwald; the third and final tent held his protégée, Minerva McGonagall.

Tonight, however, only two tents were occupied. Alastor Moody had retired early, not up to conversation. Minerva McGonagall slipped into Albus Dumbledore's tent after she was sure that the Auror was asleep.

Albus raised an eyebrow at her entrance, not saying anything until he cast several silencing charms around the tent, which was surprising large for its size, thanks to magic.

"Yes, Minerva?" he asked as she stepped closer to him, swallowing as she stopped only a few inches away from him. She closed that distance, running her hands over his chest and looking up into his sparkling blue eyes.

"Albus..." she murmured, wrapping her arms around his neck and pressing her body into his. His breathing grew heavy and he closed his eyes. She leaned her head against his chest, listening to the rapid beating of his heart, and closed her eyes as well. His arms slipped around her waist, and she gasped as she felt his hands settle on her buttocks, pulling her closer, pressing his hips against hers.

He pulled back from her, hands still resting on her lower back, and looked into her eyes.

"Minerva," he said, his voice deep and hoarse with desire. She licked her lips as she noticed his dilated pupils and the deep blue hue of his eyes.

She looked at him and was filled once more with a surge of arousal. She wanted him she had wanted him ever since her fifth year at Hogwarts. Now was her chance.

"Make love to me, Albus," she told him, her voice husky. He needed no further encouragement and took her hand, moving towards his makeshift bed with her. She sank down onto her knees and released her hair from its confining braid. For the first time, he noticed her state of undress only a single nightshirt, hardly adequate for the chilly German nights, even if it was April. He removed his socks first, then moved to his trousers and y-fronts, before removing his shirt. She had finished undressing before him, and as he looked at her, he saw her staring at his naked body eagerly.

His auburn beard fell down to the middle of his chest, and his hair was only slightly longer. Only a few streaks of grey in his hair betrayed his age, as his body was still as fit as it was thirty years earlier. His broad chest and long legs were sparsely covered with auburn fuzz, and only a few soft curls surrounded his cock, which was already firm and erect.

He also drank in her appearance with unabashed desire. Her porcelain skin, normally so pale, was flushed with desire. Her long black hair fell to the middle of her back, draping her body in its silky length. Her breasts were smaller than average but gorgeous nonetheless. Her narrow hips tapered down into slim but muscular legs.

He stepped forward, breaking the moment, and joined her on the blankets, pulling her down to lie beside him.

"Mmm..." she moaned as his lips began tracing the curves of her breasts. Her hand stroked his chest, moving lower, until it found his erection. Stroking his hard shaft gently in her small hand, he groaned as she increased the pace of her caresses. He stopped his ministrations and lifted his head, meeting her dark eyes.

"I need you now," his hoarse voice demanded as he began to press into her opening, her hand still stroking him. She released him from her grip and brought a hand around to his face, cupping his cheek gently. He moved his head so that her hand was on his mouth, and he kissed her palm sensuously as he entered her. She gasped at his sudden presence and began to moan as he pumped within her, her hand dropping from his mouth in surprise. He lay on top of her, her legs wrapped around his waist, as he drove deeper and deeper into her warm depths.

"Oh, gods, Albus, oh gods, yes, yes, more, more, please more!" she moaned as her orgasm ripples through her body. He let himself go as well, pressing into her one more time before allowing himself release, collapsing on top of her as his climax ends. He rolled onto his side, his arms around her waist as she moved with him, still joined to him. He whispered a spell and a blanket rose to cover their sweat-covered bodies. She nuzzled his neck sleepily, contentedly; he placed a kiss tenderly on the top of her dark head. Still joined, they both slept.

They never had a chance to discuss their night together. The next two days were a blur of activity as they had finally received confirmation of Grindelwald's location. In the chaos that was the Final Battle, she refused to let herself think about what they had shared, focussing only on the battle itself. She saved Albus's life and allowed him to finish the duel when she leapt in front of a *Cruciatus* Curse meant for him. And when the battle was over, they were separated, Albus taken to St. Mungo's to be healed, Minerva left abandoned on the battlefield. She was left there, no one searching for her, despite the fact that her injuries were far more extensive and severe than his; despite the fact that, even though Albus cast the final curse, she was the one who brought about the circumstances for him to finish the duel.

Two days later, a Muggle farmer discovered her lying in the field. When he realised that she was still alive, he gently lifted her into his wagon and onto a pile of hay before

he made sure that the jolting of the cart would not injure her further.

After what seemed like hours, they arrived at his small home, where a kind, plump wife, two blonde-haired daughters, and three blond-haired sons, not to mention several barking dogs, greeted him. His family gasped when they saw her, his wife taking in and assessing her injuries with a practiced eye, barking out orders in German to her children and husband. The two oldest boys gently lifted her from the cart, but despite their caution, she fainted from the pain.

She woke up in a small yet comfortable bed, the younger daughter washing her face with a damp cloth. When she noticed that Minerva was beginning to wake, she placed the cloth back in a basin of water and exited the room, calling for her mother. The plump woman entered the room and took the chair her daughter had recently occupied.

"How are you feeling?" the kindly woman asked, placing a cool hand on Minerva's forehead. Minerva smiled weakly.

"Better, thank you," she replied. "May I have a glass of water?"

The older woman nodded and filled a glass that was resting on the bedside table with water from the pitcher also resting there. She motioned to her daughter to help their patient sit up carefully, and the plump woman herself held the glass so Minerva could drink.

"Thank you," Minerva told her when she finished. The woman nodded gently.

"I am Heidi Busse, and this is my daughter Lisle. My husband, who found you, is named Konrad. We have three sons named Fritz, Max, and Willem; we also have another daughter named Marta. What is your name? And, if you are able, can you tell us what happened to you?"

Minerva's mind raced. She did not have a wand, as hers had been lost sometime during the battle. She was also sure that these kind strangers were Muggles. How could she explain what happened?

Minerva took a deep breath. "My name is Minerva McGonagall, and I am from Scotland. I was travelling with a group of people when we were attacked by soldiers. I was separated from my companions and severely injured. I had given up hope of being found when your husband discovered me and brought me back here. I am eternally grateful to you and your family for rescuing me."

She tried to base her story on the truth, as much as she could, and she thought that the woman was convinced. At any rate, the woman Mrs. Busse, Minerva corrected herself patted her hand gently and stood up from her seat.

"I am sorry this happened to you, my dear," Mrs. Busse told her. At Minerva's murmured thanks, Heidi's demeanour changed, becoming brisk and professional. "Now, Minerva do you mind if I call you Minerva?" The witch shook her head. "Now that you are awake, I need to examine you to find the extent of your injuries. Is that all right?" Minerva nodded. At her mother's instruction, Lisle closed the door and helped Minerva into a sitting position, before removing her shift.

The two women sucked in a breath at the bruises evident on her torso. Gently prodding fingers discovered two cracked ribs on her left side, as well as a broken ankle. Lisle slipped out of the room to fetch some bandages and splints.

"Well, my dear," Heidi told Minerva, "you have two cracked ribs on your left side, as well as a broken ankle. Luckily, your ankle does not appear to be too badly broken, so you must keep a splint on for at least a month, just to ensure that it heals correctly. Your ribs, however, are quite badly cracked, and I do not see how they will be able to heal in less than two months."

Minerva was disheartened by the news, but reminded herself that surely she would be able to travel back to the Wizarding world sooner. Surely, someone would come looking for her...

She inwardly shook her head at her own foolishness. Who would notice that she was missing? Alastor? Perhaps, but from what she saw during the battle she gathered that he had lost a leg. It would be some time before he noticed she was missing, and when he did, he would assume that she was dead.

Poppy? No, Poppy had not known she was going on this mission she still thought that Minerva was in France, aiding the resistance front there. Indeed, that had been her cover story. Poppy was the only one of her friends who cared enough to ask where she was going, except...

Albus.

Albus was one of the few friends that she had, and the only friend who knew where she was. But would he look for her? She didn't know. He had never professed to love her even when they'd made love, he had just said that he wanted her. Did he love her? She didn't think so. After all, if he did love her he would not have allowed them to leave her there, lying on a field, waiting for death. No, she thought, he must not love her. A lone tear dropped onto her blanket-covered lap.

She looked up suddenly as the door opened, admitting Lisle, who came bearing a basket of bandages and several slim lengths of wood. Luckily, no one had seen her cry, as Mrs. Busse had been studying Minerva's ankle. As they began to bandage her ribs and ankle, Minerva fell asleep, dreaming of Albus.

Chapter Two: June 1945

Chapter 3 of 17

Minerva heals her physical wounds and is reunited with the Wizarding world.

Chapter Two: June 1945

It had actually taken a month and a half for her ankle to heal completely, but as promised, her ribs healed in two months. After the Busses were sure that she was well, Mr. Busse drove her into town where she could then take a train to the border before beginning her long journey back to Scotland.

As much as she liked the Busses, she did not feel comfortable imposing on their hospitality any longer. Having another mouth to feed, especially when she could not do any work, was a burden upon that kind family, and Minerva departed as soon as she was able. She was homesick as well, becoming literally sick sometimes in the early mornings. She just wanted to go home.

That was how Minerva McGonagall found herself on a Muggle train headed towards Berlin. From Berlin, she knew, she would be able to buy a new wand. She had gone two months without a wand, yet she still felt naked every morning when she woke and realised that her wand was gone.

However, the Busses had taken excellent care of her they were a kind, generous family, even when it meant that their kindness let one family member go hungry. As soon

as she got to Berlin, Minerva decided, she would have the German branch of Gringotts change a large sum of Galleons into Muggle money for the Busses. Although she knew they did not expect any repayment, she wanted to give what she could to the family that had saved her life.

The train pulled in to the station, and Minerva exited the train before finding a quiet corner so she could Apparate to the German version of Diagon Alley.

She sighed in relief when she saw the glistening marble building that housed Gringotts' Berlin branch come into view. Carefully hurrying up the stairs, she nodded at the goblin that opened the door for her. Barely sparing a glance to the surroundings, she approached the counter.

A goblin peered at her from over his spectacles. "May I help you?" he asked her, taking in her Muggle attire.

"Yes, I would like to make a withdrawal," she replied confidently.

"Do you have your key?" Minerva's eyes widened she had forgotten about her key!

"No," she began, "You see, I have lost it..."

The goblin cut her off. "I'm sorry, but we cannot help you. Good day."

Minerva exited the bank, her head hanging. How could she get home if she had neither a wand nor any money? She was also without references, so she would not be able to get a job. And she knew no one in Germany. What was she to do?

Alastor Moody limped down the streets of Muggle Berlin, cursing inwardly at his wooden leg. Why had he not gotten out of the way in time to avoid Grindelwald's Cutting Hex? He shook his head, clearing his thoughts, and entered the small pub that served as the connection between Muggle and Magical Berlin.

He grumbled to himself as he stood in the courtyard, waiting for the gateway to form. Why the bartender had to deposit the trash here, he would never know it was disgusting. And the rancid smell of spoiled meat was only made worse by the unnaturally hot June weather.

The gateway finally formed, and he stepped through, wincing at his uneven gait caused by his wooden leg. He was walking past Gringotts when he heard someone call his name. He turned and found himself face to face with someone he thought was dead.

"Minerva!" he exclaimed, drawing his wand, just in case.

Minerva thought her eyes were deceiving her Alastor Moody surely would not be here, of all places would he? But the wooden leg she saw convinced her that it actually was him, and she took the chance by calling out his name.

"Alastor!" she called and rushed towards him, only stopping herself from embracing him when she noticed his drawn wand.

Alastor did not take any chances; after all, his motto was 'constant vigilance.'

"Where did we camp the day before Grindelwald was defeated?" he questioned her, his wand pointed with deadly accuracy at her heart.

"In the middle of the wilderness under a rocky overhang," she replied promptly. "You felt it best to hide ourselves both by natural and magical means."

He lowered his wand, satisfied with her answer, and embraced her roughly.

"Good Merlin, Minerva, I thought that you were dead!" he said, his voice hoarse with emotion. She sobbed into his shoulder in relief.

"I almost was, Alastor. But what are you doing in Berlin?"

"Been trying to get the Ministry here to send someone to look for your body," he said gruffly. "They found your wand, and I volunteered to retrieve it. I was just about to take a Portkey back to our Ministry." He handed her the familiar piece of wood.

She sobbed even harder as she took her wand, overwhelmed by this unexpected turn of events. Alastor patted her back somewhat awkwardly.

"My Portkey leaves shortly, Minerva," he told her. She looked up at him with hopeful eyes.

"Can I come with you, Alastor? I have no money I lost my vault key and I want to go home," she told him, eyes tearing up again.

He nodded. "Of course, but we need to hurry. Can't miss the Portkey." They made their way quickly to the Portkey departure point and were handed a plummy purple quill that smelled like lemon drops.

"Dumbledore, always one for theatrics," Alastor scoffed, and Minerva's heart wrenched as she thought of Albus. He had not come to retrieve her wand did she really mean that little to him? Suddenly, she felt the familiar jerk behind her navel as the Portkey activated, and her world spun violently before coming to an abrupt halt.

Five minutes later, Minerva was wiping her mouth with Alastor's handkerchief. "Thank you, Alastor," she said gratefully. "I do not know why that happened I've never become sick when using a Portkey." He shrugged off her thanks, telling her to keep the handkerchief. They walked down the corridor to Kermit Gamp's office, the current Minister of Magic.

Alastor knocked on the door, stepping back to allow Minerva to enter first when it was opened from the inside. She entered the office, stopping abruptly when a man sitting in an armchair by the fire rose. Her world swayed alarmingly, and she tried to grab onto something solid. The next thing she knew, everything was dark.

When Minerva regained consciousness, she was in a room at St. Mungo's. The window's view of the sunset gave her some idea of how much time had passed. As she began to take in her surroundings, a Healer bustled in.

"Ah, good, you're awake! Your visitors will be happy to hear that," the Healer told her, handing Minerva a purple potion. She swallowed it obediently, too tired to argue, but grimaced at the taste.

"What happened?" she asked.

"Well, from what I have been told, you entered the Minister's office and fainted. You were suffering from dehydration and stress, which were exacerbated by your pregnancy," the Healer said, taking her pulse.

"What? I'm not pregnant!" Minerva denied vehemently.

The Healer laughed. "Yes, you are you are two months pregnant." Not noticing Minerva's distress, she said, "I'll fetch your visitors now."

Minerva's head spun. She was pregnant? How could she not have noticed? She was pregnant... with Albus's child. The realisation hit her hard. How could she tell him? What would she do? Would he even care?

The door opening, admitting Poppy and Alastor, interrupted Minerva's thoughts. Poppy rushed over to Minerva's side and gave her a tight hug.

"Oh, Minerva, I'm so glad to see you when Alastor told me you were dead I did not know what to do I'm so glad that you are alive!" Poppy wept. Minerva returned her hug.

"I am glad as well, Poppy," she said, crying too.

"What's the diagnosis, Minerva?" Alastor asked, his gruff voice an attempt to conceal any emotion.

Minerva wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, leaning back against the pillows as Poppy released her from her embrace.

"Yes, Minerva, what's wrong?" Poppy chimed in.

Minerva took a deep breath before responding. "I'm pregnant."

They gaped at her, open-mouthed, utterly shocked at her pronouncement.

Alastor recovered first. "Who's the father?"

Minerva lowered her eyes, intently studying the weave of the blanket spread across her lap.

"I can't tell you, I'm sorry," she mumbled, flushing.

"Now, really, Minerva!" Poppy scoffed. "Besides Albus," Minerva flinched at his name, but Poppy did not notice, "we are your closest friends. If you cannot tell us, who can you tell?"

"I'm sorry," she mumbled again, resolutely refusing to meet their eyes.

Poppy opened her mouth to say something again, but Alastor laid a hand on her arm and cut her off.

"Minerva, the Healers say that you can be released. Do you have somewhere to stay?" Alastor asked her.

Minerva nodded. "I can stay at my family manor. The house-elves have maintained it."

"Good," Alastor said. "I'll Floo back with you, just to make sure you are settled in. Is that all right?"

Minerva nodded again. "Thank you, Alastor," she told him gratefully.

Poppy helped her sit up and gave her a warm hug. "I've got to get back to work, Minerva, but owl me," she told her friend. Minerva agreed and let herself be escorted to the Floo station by Alastor Moody.

"McGonagall Manor!" Minerva said clearly, and disappeared in a rush of green flames.

Chapter Three: December 1945

Chapter 4 of 17

Minerva gives birth, is betrayed by one she thought was a friend, and receives an unwanted visitor.

Chapter Three: December 1945

Almost directly after Minerva arrived at her family manor, she was besieged by house-elves.

"Will Mistress Minerva be staying long?" Prossy, the head house-elf asked her.

"Yes, I will be living here from now until further notice," she told the house-elf, who nodded and popped away, presumably to pass the word on to the other house-elves. A rush of green flames from the fireplace behind her signalled Alastor's arrival.

"It's Albus's child, isn't it?" he asked her bluntly.

She nodded and sunk into an armchair, burying her face in her hands.

"I thought so," he said, pacing around the room. "Now, what are you going to do about it?" he questioned her, suddenly stopping his pacing, and looked deep into her eyes.

She sighed. "I don't know, Alastor," she told him truthfully. "I've just found out that I am pregnant – I need a bit longer than fifteen minutes to sort out my feelings on this matter!" she added acerbically.

"Well, don't take too much time," he said. "We need you back in the department."

She stood up quickly. "That's all you care about?" she asked him furiously. "You're not asking me these questions out of concern for my well-being?"

His face was suffused with a dull flush, and his lack of a quick response was all the answer she needed.

"Get out!" she ordered him, pointing towards the fireplace. "I will not make the decision to terminate my child's life just because the Ministry of Magic wants me back!"

Alastor did not respond; he simply took a handful of Floo powder from the bowl on the mantelpiece and threw it into the fire, calling out, "The Ministry of Magic!" He was whisked away in another rush of green flames, and she let herself fall back in her chair.

"What am I going to do?" she whispered to herself, rubbing her still-flat stomach. "What am I going to do?"

She decided to keep and raise her child. The months passed quickly, and she did not hear from the Ministry of Magic, Albus, or Alastor. Minerva sequestered herself in the McGonagall Manor, not emerging from her childhood home for anything. Her only connection to the outside world was Poppy. She stopped by several times a week to check up on Minerva and keep her informed of the events happening outside of McGonagall Manor.

"Why won't you even go into London for a day?" Poppy asked her in late August. "It would only do you good to get out of this house."

Minerva shook her head. "I don't want to be around people, Poppy," she told her friend. "I just want to be alone."

Poppy looked at her, unconvinced by her half-truthful answer. Though Poppy was discontent with the response to her prodding, she accepted it, knowing that Minerva was stubborn and would not budge on the matter.

Minerva did not want to venture past the boundaries of McGonagall Manor because she did not want to risk seeing Albus or Alastor again. After the day she found out she was pregnant, she had not seen either of the two men again. While Alastor knew that she was pregnant, and that Albus was the father, Albus did not, and she could only hope that Alastor had not told him. She hoped that Albus did not know – it would break her heart if he were aware of the situation and did not care enough to do anything about it.

Minerva spent the months before her child's arrival preparing for the birth – she organised a redecoration of the entire house, ordered new furniture for the nursery she had used as a child, gone through her old toys and books, knit blankets, booties, hats, and mittens, and prepared for the upcoming change in her life.

Poppy had insisted that Minerva spend her holidays at Poppy's home in London, and after much cajoling, Minerva had given in to her request. She arrived at Poppy's flat the evening of the 21st of December. Poppy even convinced her to accompany her on a walk about the neighbourhood. Later that evening, Minerva collapsed into bed, complaining of back pains. At three o'clock the next morning, she went into labour.

As the baby was a month premature, Minerva did not fight Poppy's decision to take her to St. Mungo's. She wanted this child to survive, and if going to St. Mungo's would ensure her baby's survival, she would go. It was lucky she did.

After sixteen hours of excruciating labour, complications arose in the delivery. Some of the best Healers at St. Mungo's were called in – Minerva was haemorrhaging, and the baby's vital signs were dropping rapidly. After several touch-and-go minutes, they were able to stabilise both Minerva and the child. Eighteen hours after Minerva had gone into labour, her daughter was born.

Name: Lily Marlene McGonagall

Date of Birth: 22 December 1945

Time of Birth: 2106 hours

Place of Birth: St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries

Birth Weight: 2.9 kg

Birth Height: 45 cm

Mother's Name: Minerva Jean McGonagall

Father's Name: Unknown

Minerva and her daughter spent their Christmas and New Year's at St. Mungo's. On 3 January, the Healers felt that she was well enough to be released, so Minerva and Lily made their way back to McGonagall Manor.

They had to take the Knight Bus – although Minerva despised it – because it was not safe enough for Lily to Floo back to their home; she could not Apparate them back for the same reasons. One of the only other methods of magical transportation available to them was a Portkey, but Minerva did not want to have to go to the Ministry of Magic to register for one and have everyone discover the birth of her daughter. She just was not ready for that yet. Unfortunately for her, her daughter's birth was on the front page of the *Daily Prophet*.

FORMER AUROR MCGONAGALL GIVES BIRTH TO DUMBLEDORE'S LOVE CHILD

Author's Name Withheld per their Request

According to a source, former Auror Minerva McGonagall, a key fighter against Grindelwald, gave birth to Albus Dumbledore's child on the 22nd of December 1945. Albus Dumbledore is the Deputy Headmaster, Head of Gryffindor House, and Professor of Transfiguration at Hogwarts. He is on the Wizengamot and was awarded the Order of Merlin, First Class, for his defeat of the Dark Wizard Grindelwald. He and his wife Colleen Longbottom are expecting their first child in April. They were married in June, after a very brief engagement.

According to our source, Miss McGonagall disappeared for two months after the last battle. While originally believed dead, we now know that was not the case. In light of these facts, we at the *Daily Prophet* have some questions: Where did she go? What was she doing? As she was not in contact with any member of the Ministry of Magic or any other member of the magical world during those two months, we must look at her integrity with a healthy dose of scepticism. Was this child a product of a loving relationship, a passionate tryst, or some form of Dark Magic? We at the *Daily Prophet* think the latter.

When Prossy brought her that issue of the *Daily Prophet*, Minerva almost fainted. Albus was *married*? Why had no one thought to tell her? And it must have been Alastor who told the *Daily Prophet* – no one else, not even Albus himself, knew that Albus was the father. But one of the most disturbing accusations was the one accusing her of using Dark Magic to conceive her daughter. She would never use Dark Magic – especially not for that reason. She had been in love with Albus ever since her sixth year at Hogwarts.

A knock sounded at her bedroom door. "Come in!" she called wearily, cradling her daughter in her arms.

Prossy stepped into the room. "Mistress Minerva is having a visitor!" the house-elf squeaked, stepping aside to allow an auburn-haired man with sparkling blue eyes to enter the room. Prossy quietly exited the room, closing the door behind her.

Albus stepped closer to the bed. "Hello, Minerva," he said sombrely. "Is this our child?"

Chapter Four: January 1946

Chapter 5 of 17

Minerva confronts Albus and learns the truth about someone she trusted.

Chapter Four: January 1946

When Albus had entered the room, Minerva held her daughter tightly to her chest, not willing to let this man near their baby.

When he stepped closer to the bed and asked her if this was their child, Minerva glared at him, willing him to leave them alone. He ignored her fierce gaze and Conjured a chintz armchair near the head of her bed.

"Minerva, I am so sorry," he said, tears dripping down his face. "I thought you were dead."

She laughed humourlessly. "Not that you cared enough to check yourself," she spat, relishing the injured look on Albus's face.

"Alastor told me that you were hit by the Killing Curse," Albus said defiantly. "He wouldn't let me go back to find you – he said that he'd take care of finding your body."

"So when did you find out that I was still alive?" she spat.

"This morning," he said, looking her in the eye. "When I read the *Daily Prophet*."

"And not before then?" she questioned him harshly. "Not when I saw you in the Minister's office after Alastor had Portkeyed me back from Germany?" He shook his head, confused.

"Alastor never told me he found you in Germany," he said, his frown increasing. "He said that he couldn't even recover your wand..." He stood up and began to pace around the room.

"Then whom did I see in the Minister's office?" she questioned him, still not believing his excuses.

"What day did you return?" he asked. She cocked her head to one side, thinking, before she shrugged her shoulders.

"I'm not sure... sometime in late June."

Albus nodded his head. "I was in the States for the last two weeks of June and the first week of July," Albus told her. "On my..." He trailed off, looking away from her.

"Yes?" she prompted him.

He looked down at the floor. "On my honeymoon."

"Oh." She leaned back against the cushions, his explanation hitting her like a particularly powerful curse.

"I don't love her, Minerva," he said, striding to the bed and kneeling next to it. "I love you. I was heartbroken when Alastor told me that you were dead – especially as he said you took the curse for me." Tears dripped down his face and into his beard.

"Then why did you marry someone else?" she asked, her voice soft and deadly, but full of pain. "If you loved me, then how could you forget me so quickly?"

Tears continued to flow down his face, which seemed ancient in his grief. "I never forgot you, Minerva. When he told me that you were dead, it was as if the world had ended for me – I felt nothing anymore – nothing but pain. I went through the motions of livings – I couldn't believe that this was not a nightmare. My parents tried to get me to start living again, and they arranged a marriage for me with Colleen. I only went through with it because Alastor said that you would not want me to be unhappy. Colleen's family and mine have been friends for generations. Her parents, and mine, encouraged the marriage. By the time I realised what was happening was not a nightmare, that it was reality, it was too late, and we were Bonded."

"Why didn't Alastor tell you that he found me? Why did he lie to you?" Minerva asked him, fighting back tears of her own.

"I don't know," Albus said. "Maybe he didn't tell me because I was already married – there was nothing – is nothing – I can do to break the Bond – unless Colleen agrees to break it. Maybe he wanted to save me some pain."

"But what about me? He knew that I was carrying your child!" Minerva sobbed, tears finally breaking through. "How could he do this?"

"He knew?" Albus asked, straightening up, his tears put aside for another occasion. "How long had he known?"

"I found out the day Alastor brought me back from Germany. I fainted in the Minister's office, and I was brought to Saint Mungo's, where I found out that I was pregnant."

Albus stood up, radiating fury. "How dare he," he hissed, furious. He calmed himself before taking her hand.

"Minerva, if he had told me – if I had even the slightest inkling of information telling me that you were alive, I would have been at your side in a second. You are my everything – and though I hoped, when Alastor said that he could not find your body, that you were still alive, I trusted him and believed him when he said that he saw you die. My trust in him cost me too much – and I promise you that I will find out why he did this."

"And then what? We'll live happily ever after?"

"I don't know what will happen after that," Albus admitted, his head hanging. "I can ask Colleen to consent to break the Bond, but..."

"But you want to be together with her, as a family, to raise your child," Minerva finished for him, her tone bitter.

"Please, Minerva, try to understand..." Albus began pleadingly.

She barked out a mirthless laugh. "Try to understand that you want to stay with your wife and have a happy family? No, I can't understand that, especially when you are not even considering your daughter," Minerva snapped.

"There is no good decision, Minerva," he said. "Please understand why I am making this one."

"I can't understand it, Albus, and don't ask me to. Now, please leave, before I do something that I will regret," she dismissed him. Taking her free hand in his, he placed a kiss on the back, his lips barely touching her soft skin before she yanked her hand away from him.

"I love you, Minerva," he whispered.

"Goodbye, Albus," she said.

He walked out the door, looking back only once to see Minerva cradling their child.

Chapter Five: December 1946

Chapter 6 of 17

Minerva and her daughter go into hiding; an unexpected, but not unwelcome, visitor finds them.

Chapter Five: December 1946

"Happy birthday to you; happy birthday to you; happy birthday, dear Marlene; happy birthday to you!" Minerva sang to her daughter, who was sitting in a high chair in their small kitchen, a little cake with a single candle carefully placed on the high chair tray. As her mother sang, Marlene clapped her hands and giggled, showing the baby teeth that were just emerging from her gums. At the end of the song, Minerva leaned over and blew out the candle for her daughter, before slicing the cake and cutting her daughter's slice into manageable pieces. Marlene smiled and began playing with her food, smearing cake in her bright auburn hair and all over her smiling face. Minerva sighed good-naturedly and cast a gentle cleaning spell on her daughter.

Marlene's eyes soon grew heavy and she began to fall asleep, so Minerva waved her wand to clean up the mess and took her daughter carefully out of her high chair, walking down a narrow hallway to another small room. Stroking her hair, Minerva sang a lullaby, rocking her daughter to sleep as she held her. Her daughter finally fell asleep, and Minerva laid her gently in her crib before heading back to the kitchen to clean up.

After Albus had made the decision to go back to his wife, Minerva ordered her house-elf to pack up her things and prepare her tiny cottage in the Hebrides Islands for their arrival. The very next day, Minerva, Marlene, and her house-elf moved to the tiny cottage. No one knew where they were, and no one knew that this cabin existed, which was exactly what Minerva wanted. She did not want anyone to find them.

For the most part, they lived as Muggles, as the small village near where her cottage was located was a Muggle one. But in the privacy of the little cottage, Minerva still used magic, because there were wards around their home preventing Ministry detection of magic. She broke off contact with everyone she knew, even her good friend Poppy Pomfrey, so that Albus would not be able to find them. She began calling herself Jean and called her daughter by her middle name as well Marlene so great was Minerva's desire to hide herself from the Wizarding world. She took up a new surname as well: MacLeod.

And so Minerva began to raise her daughter in a small cottage in the Hebrides. At first, it was difficult Minerva knew very little about raising children but she soon made friends with the older women in the village, who helped her learn the best methods to lull Marlene to sleep when she was fussy, how to prevent the pain of teething, how to transition her from milk to solid food. Without the kind women of the village it would have been impossible for them to have survived, so far isolated from all that she knew. When she was questioned about Marlene's father, Minerva said that he had died in a freak accident.

It was not a lonely existence she had her house-elf and her daughter, to say nothing of the kind and friendly villagers and she was able to raise her daughter without fear that anyone would find them. That was all changed when Fawkes, Albus's phoenix, appeared in a ball of fire one day in October.

"What are you doing here, Fawkes?" Minerva asked the phoenix, despite the fact that she knew he could not answer. He trilled a sorrowful note and flew over to Marlene's bedroom door, hovering outside of it.

"You want to see Marlene?" she asked him, and he cooed. Reluctantly, she opened the door. "All right. But she's sleeping you must be quiet." Fawkes nodded and flew over to Marlene's crib, perching on the side, looking down at the sleeping girl. He very gently ran his beak through her bright hair and then flew back out into the hallway. Minerva quietly closed the door to Marlene's room and followed Fawkes into the kitchen.

"Did Albus send you?" Minerva asked, relieved when Fawkes indicated that Albus had not sent him. "Please don't tell him where we are, Fawkes." Fawkes nodded, nipping her finger lightly before flashing away in a burst of flame. Minerva sagged in her chair, relieved that Albus had not yet found them.

Despite the fact that Minerva did not want Albus to find them, a small part of her did. The fact that he obviously was not looking for them hurt her it proved that he didn't really love her as he'd claimed. If Albus really loved her as he claimed, he would have found them by now Fawkes obviously could find them easily. And Albus never even sent her an owl never even tried to contact her. He didn't love her he'd lied to her.

Minerva sighed longingly as she thought of the life that she and Albus could have had together. She stood up and walked into her bedroom, taking out her wand and tapping the top drawer of her nightstand three times. The drawer opened and she took out an album filled with newspaper clippings.

Sitting on her bed, she started at the beginning of the album with the article headlined **Profile of a War Hero**. Underneath the headline was a picture of Albus and his wife Colleen on their wedding day. The photograph-Albus did not even look up at her; he was looking lovingly at his wife. Colleen alternately looked up at Albus adoringly and up at Minerva spitefully.

Minerva flipped to the articles written in April 1946, when his son was born. The first article on this topic was published in the *Daily Prophet* on 13 April 1946. The headline read **The Next Generation of Dumbledores: The Birth of Albus Dumbledore's Son** Once again, there was a picture underneath the headline, featuring Albus, Colleen, and his son, Lancelot Percival Wulfric Dumbledore.

The article was written by Willa Wilder, and it said the following: *The much-anticipated arrival of the heir to the Dumbledore family has finally occurred Albus Dumbledore's wife, Colleen, gave birth to their son Albert Percival Wulfric Dumbledore on the 12th of April, 1946. He was born at 4:57 in the afternoon...*

...the happy family currently resides at Hogwarts, where Albus Dumbledore is the Deputy Headmaster, Head of Gryffindor House, and Professor of Transfiguration. Colleen Dumbledore (née Longbottom) is the professor of Astronomy. We at the Daily Prophet give the Dumbledores our most sincere congratulations and best wishes for the future.

The next article she turned to was dated 20th of December, 1946, and was the last article in her collection. The headline read **Christmas with the Dumbledores**, and it was also written by Willa Wilder. The article consisted of several pages of photographs with captions. The photographs showed Albus and Colleen decorating their Christmas tree, their son perched on Albus's shoulders; Colleen helping Albert wrap presents; Fawkes perched on Albert's head, wearing a miniature Father Christmas hat; and a photograph of the Dumbledore family, including Albus, Colleen, Albert, Aberforth, Albus's parents, and Colleen's parents. Minerva sadly noted that they all looked incredibly happy and joyful especially Albus. He looked incredibly enamoured of Colleen, and she with him. And Minerva had never seen him look happier or more content in the many years she had known him.

When she finished torturing herself by looking at the pictures of him and his family, she carefully replaced the album in her nightstand drawer and closed it before lying down on her bed and bursting into sobs.

She didn't have time to wallow in her grief, because she heard Marlene let out a wail. Minerva quickly wiped away her tears and rushed down the hallway to her daughter's room. Marlene was standing up in her crib, clutching the sides tightly, as she bawled. Minerva picked her daughter up and carried her to the rocking chair that was in the corner of the room, sitting down in it and cradling her daughter in her arms.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?" Minerva asked her daughter. Marlene's sobs slowed as she burrowed her face against her mother.

"Bad dream," Marlene hiccupped.

"Oh, my poor darling!" Minerva cooed, stroking Marlene's hair and rocking her back and forth. "What was the dream about?"

"A big bird on fire burned my house," Marlene said. She was a very articulate child – she began speaking at the age of nine months.

Minerva's heart froze at her description of a phoenix. Was Marlene awake the time that Fawkes had visited them? She couldn't take any chances.

"Marlene, have you ever seen a bird like that before?"

Marlene nodded. "One day in my room."

Minerva didn't know what to do. Perhaps she should tell Marlene about Fawkes... no. It was too dangerous. She might accidentally tell someone. But Minerva did not want her to have nightmares anymore.

"Sweetheart, there is a type of bird that bursts into flames like that – it is called a phoenix. They are nice birds, and they will never hurt you. There aren't that many in the world though, and most people think that they don't exist anymore. Would you like to see a picture?"

Marlene's tears had stopped and she nodded her head eagerly. Minerva Summoned her old copy of *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and opened to the page describing the phoenix. Marlene touched the picture that showed the phoenix bursting into flames and emerging from the ashes.

"Are you all right now, Marlene?" Minerva asked her daughter, pleased when she nodded her head. "Good. There's nothing to be scared of."

"I'm hungry," Marlene announced calmly. Minerva laughed and picked her up again.

"Then let's get you something to eat."

Marlene's nightmare was forgotten as Minerva absorbed herself in preparing dinner for the two of them.

Chapter Six: April 1947

Chapter 7 of 17

Albus's son has his first birthday; Albus, Colleen, Alastor, Kendra, Minerva, and Fawkes reflect on the events of the past few years.

Chapter Six: April 1947

Colleen had spent the day before Albert's first birthday decorating their home in Godric's Hollow for his party. Both sets of his grandparents would be there, along with Albus's brother, Aberforth, her brothers, Algie and Harfang, Albert's godfather, Alastor Moody, and his godmother, Poppy Pomfrey. Everyone was so excited for Albert's first birthday – Colleen and Albus especially. Albus had spent quite a lot of time preparing for the party – creating a spell that would record every moment for Albert to peruse later in his life.

When she and Albus first were married, she could tell that his mind was on someone else – on another woman, she supposed. And her suspicions were confirmed one day in December of 1945 when there was an article published in the *Daily Prophet* claiming that Minerva McGonagall had given birth to Albus's child. He disappeared for a day, but when he returned, he was a changed man. He was more amorous than ever – more loving, more caring, more present than he ever had been before. After that, their marriage had been perfect – she could tell that he was completely focussed on her and in love with her – not with that McGonagall girl. Colleen was happier than she ever had been before – she had a happy marriage, a wonderful son, and a fabulous life.

Albus sat at his desk, thinking about Minerva and their daughter. He didn't even know his own daughter's name, the colour of her eyes, or the colour of her hair... He loved Minerva and his daughter (though he knew almost nothing about her – he had never even held her), but he also had grown to love his wife and, of course, he loved his son unconditionally.

But Minerva... he did love her, but... he had his responsibilities to his family, and he couldn't let them down. And he was happy with Colleen and their son. Minerva and their child were no more than a memory to him now, after a year and a half. He hadn't even thought of her or their child since December – let alone tried to find them. A tiny voice deep inside his head wondered why, but he ignored it.

Alastor Moody put the final touches on his present for his godson – he had enchanted a stuffed phoenix to alert his parents to any trouble he might be in. Everything was going according to plan – Minerva was out of the picture, the spell he had cast on Albus was still working perfectly, and everyone was pleased with the results. Albus was married to Colleen, a respectable woman from a long line of purebloods; they had a legitimate son; and the Dumbledore line was established – all according to what Albus's parents wanted. And he had got his reward – he was now the Head of the Auror Department.

Kendra Dumbledore signed her grandson's birthday card and sat back in her chair, thinking about all the events of the past year and a half. Thank goodness she had the foresight to hire Alastor Moody to keep an eye on her son. She knew that they had both desired each other when she was his student, and when she was one of the few with Albus towards the end of the war, she had been worried that he would take up with that McGonagall girl and disgrace the family, so when he did, she had ordered Alastor to incapacitate her during the final battle and leave her on the battlefield. Unfortunately, when that girl turned up again, and pregnant to boot, there were problems. Once again, she was fortunate to have acquired Alastor's services, and he was able to keep her out of the way. But when there were complications with that McGonagall's girl's delivery, and she was sent to Saint Mungo's, the fact that she was carrying her son's child became public. Yet again, Alastor's services were invaluable. He contacted Willa Wilder, and she wrote a fantastic article about how that McGonagall girl used Dark magic to seduce her boy. And, finally, to make sure that her son didn't abandon his loving wife and then-unborn child for that hussy, Kendra had Alastor cast a spell on Albus to make him forget what he felt for that girl. She knew that that was the only way that he would stay with his wife and child. And it worked. It worked.

Her daughter was sixteen months old when Albus and Colleen's son had his first birthday. The *Daily Prophet* and *Witch Weekly* ran photograph spreads of his son's birthday party. Minerva's heart hurt when she looked at the happy family – especially the photographs which included Alastor Moody – Alastor – who had betrayed her! How could Albus have welcomed him into his family? Especially after Albus knew that Alastor had betrayed her! How could he? How?

Something wasn't right – she could tell. But what would she do about it? What *could* she do about it?

Fawkes knew that something was wrong – Albus hadn't seen Minerva in a long time – he hadn't even tried to find her. It was as if she never existed... But Fawkes knew that she did, and that her daughter was Albus's daughter, and that the child was conceived in love. He visited Minerva and her daughter every month to make sure that they were safe, because he couldn't do anything else to help them...

Chapter Seven: September 1953

Chapter 8 of 17

Albus has a disturbing dream about Minerva and Marlene.

Chapter Seven: September 1953

"Mummy!" Marlene called up to Minerva. "We're going to be late!"

"Just a moment, dear!" Minerva called from upstairs as she finished getting dressed.

A few moments later, she rushed downstairs and grabbed her coat and a bag full of books before joining her daughter by the front door. Minerva opened the door, as Marlene's arms were full with her schoolbooks. They walked swiftly down the path to the centre of the small village they lived in. Minerva opened the door to the small school, and they entered the one-room schoolhouse.

Minerva walked over to her desk at the front of the classroom and laid her books down on the top before turning to the blackboard and writing out the day's lessons. Minerva had been teaching at the school for the past three years, ever since Marlene was old enough to attend school.

There weren't many children in the small village where they lived, so Minerva's job was quite easy – she only taught eleven children, including her daughter. There were four children in the primer class – Robert Campbell, Kathleen McMillan, William Quinn, and Rosalie Ulster; four children in the intermediate class – Alastair Drummond, Brigit Wallace, Murray Abernathy, and her daughter, who went by the name Marlene McLeod; and three children in the upper class – Morag Kincaid, Tristan Crawford, and Nora McLaughlin.

While waiting for school to begin, Marlene had sat down at her desk and began reading a book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* while her mother wrote the day's lessons on the blackboard. Soon enough, it was eight o'clock, and the students entered the schoolhouse.

"Good morning, class," Minerva said as her students took their seats.

"Good morning, Mrs. McLeod," her students chimed.

"Now, today we will be studying..."

It was the Opening Feast at Hogwarts, and Armando Dippet gave the speech, opening the school year. After the Sorting and the Feast, Albus and his wife returned to their chambers. Their son had been in the care of one of the many Hogwarts house-elves, and he was already asleep by the time they returned. Colleen and Albus retired to their bedroom, where they made love. They both drifted off to sleep soon after reaching orgasm. That night, Albus dreamed of Minerva.

A woman was sitting on a small bed in an unfamiliar room, a young girl, around eight, sitting next to her. They were reading a book together – it was an achingly beautiful scene. Suddenly, a ball of flame burst into the room, and Fawkes appeared. The woman looked up, and Albus realised that the woman was Minerva, and that the girl must be their daughter.

"Hello, Fawkes," the girl said, her voice a younger version of Minerva's. She stroked his head, and Fawkes cooed, nuzzling her chin. Albus's heart ached as he watched his daughter and his familiar snuggled together. Fawkes began to sing a lullaby, and the girl drifted off to sleep easily. Minerva kissed Fawkes lightly on his head and quietly walked out of the room, entering another bedroom. She cast a one-way Silencing charm on the door and pulled out an album and a stack of newspaper clippings.

She began to place each clipping in the album, organised by date. When the final clipping was safely preserved, she burst into tears.

"Oh, Albus," she sobbed, burying her face in a pillow. "Why don't you care for me? Why don't you care for your daughter? Why?"

The door to her bedroom opened quietly, and her daughter's face appeared in the opening. When she saw her mother crying, she rushed into the room and threw herself in her mother's arms.

"Mummy, what's wrong?" she asked, smoothing back her mother's hair maternally. Her mother embraced her daughter tightly, muffling her sobs. As her daughter hugged her, Marlene caught sight of the album Minerva had been looking at before she entered the room.

"Mummy, what's this?" Marlene asked, releasing her mother from her embrace and reaching for the album. Minerva looked at her, wide-eyed, and tried to get the album out of her daughter's sight, but Marlene held on fast.

"Mummy, who is this?" Marlene asked, pointed at a man with long hair and a beard, the same colour as her own hair.

Minerva sighed, trying not to cry again. "That's Albus Dumbledore, Marlene," her mother told her.

*Marlene turned to the first page of the album, to an article titled **FORMER AUROR MCGONAGALL GIVES BIRTH TO DUMBLEDORE'S LOVE CHILD**. The article read as follows:*

According to a source, former Auror Minerva McGonagall, a key fighter against Grindelwald, gave birth to Albus Dumbledore's child on the 22nd of December 1945. Albus Dumbledore is the Deputy Headmaster, Head of Gryffindor House, and Professor of Transfiguration at Hogwarts. He is on the Wizengamot and was awarded the Order of Merlin, First Class, for his defeat of the Dark Wizard Grindelwald. He and his wife Colleen Longbottom are expecting their first child in April. They were married in June, after a very brief engagement.

According to our source, Miss McGonagall disappeared for two months after the last battle. While originally believed dead, we now know that was not the case. In light of these facts, we at the Daily Prophet have some questions: Where did she go? What was she doing? As she was not in contact with any member of the Ministry of Magic or any other member of the magical world during those two months, we must look at her integrity with a healthy dose of scepticism. Was this child a product of a loving relationship, a passionate tryst, or some form of Dark Magic? We at the Daily Prophet think the latter.

"Who is Minerva McGonagall?" Marlene asked.

"It's me," Minerva told her reluctantly.

"But your name is Jean McLeod!" Marlene said. "Not Minerva McGonagall!"

"No, darling, my name is Minerva Jean McGonagall. And your name isn't Marlene McLeod it's Lily Marlene McGonagall though it should be Lily Marlene McGonagall Dumbledore."

"So Albus Dumbledore is my father?" Marlene asked.

Her mother nodded and embraced her. "I'm sorry that I never told you, my darling," Minerva apologised.

"Why did you change our names?" Marlene asked.

"We're in hiding, my darling. Hiding from your father and from the Wizarding world."

"I've always wondered why we never met any wizards. Why is that? Why are we in hiding? And why are we hiding from my father, of all people?" Marlene cried.

"You read the article, my darling. That is what the Wizarding world thinks of me. But it's not true I did not use Dark Magic to conceive you. On the night before your father defeated Grindelwald, we made love, and you were conceived. After the battle, after Grindelwald was defeated, I was left at the battlefield to die. A Muggle man, Mr. Busse, found me and brought me back to his home, where he and his family cared for me for three months. I eventually found Alastor Moody, who had fought the final battle with me and your father, and he brought me back to London from Germany. When I arrived in London, I found out that I was pregnant with you. I went back to my family home and stayed there until you were born. I had to go to Saint Mungo's, the Wizarding hospital, because there were complications with your birth. After you were born, this article was published the only one who knew all of the information was Alastor Moody he betrayed me. After the article was published, your father came to see me. He told me that Alastor Moody had told him that I was dead. He had married another woman named Colleen Longbottom, and they have a son, named Albert, who is seven and a half now. He told me that although he loved me, he wanted to stay with his wife. The next day I had Prossy pack up our things and we moved here."

"Oh, Mummy," Marlene wailed, burying her face in her mother's lap. Now it was her mother's turn to be the comforter, and she stroked her daughter's hair, letting her own tears drop onto her daughter's bright auburn hair the hair she had inherited from her father.

Albus woke up, sitting straight up in his bed and breathing heavily. That dream had seemed so real, and he tried to remember all that had happened to make him abandon Minerva.

Why had he done that? Why had he abandoned the love of his life? And why had he abandoned his child? Why?

Albus got out of bed and wrote his wife a note, telling her not to worry, that he would be gone for a few days. Then he got dressed and called for Fawkes, who appeared in a flash of flame. Albus told Fawkes that he needed to go to Minerva, and Fawkes and Albus disappeared, reappearing in Minerva's bedroom, startling the woman and child in the room. Minerva stood up.

"Albus?"

Chapter Eight: September to October 1953

Chapter 9 of 17

Albus arrives at Minerva's home unexpectedly; Marlene meets her father.

Chapter Eight: September to October 1953

"Albus?" Minerva asked, her hand flying to her heart in surprise. She dropped back onto the bed and her daughter crawled into her lap, pressing her face against her mother's neck. Fawkes flew over to the women on the bed and perched on Minerva's shoulder. Albus looked into Minerva's eyes, not breaking eye contact even though her gaze was filled with sadness, reproach, and anger.

"Minerva," Albus said, approaching the bed. As he neared her, she scooted away from him, moving her daughter with her. Albus stopped in his tracks, hurt that she would back away from him.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

"I want to be with you and our daughter," he said.

"What about your wife," Minerva spat out the word as though it was poison, "and your son? Aren't they the most important people in your life?"

During Minerva's tirade, Marlene had stolen glances at her father. Both he and her mother were too wrapped up in their discussion to notice her staring at him.

Marlene had always wondered about her father her mother had refused to talk about him, refusing even to mention him. Minerva had only ever told her daughter two things about Marlene's father: that she had his hair and that he died in a freak accident. Now, Marlene was finding out that her father was not dead, but was alive, and it seemed that he was married to someone else.

"Why did you leave us?" Marlene asked, peering out at her father from her mother's embrace, interrupting their uncomfortable silence. Both of her parents looked at her,

her father with a guilty expression and her mother with a sad one.

Her father cleared his throat. "I'm not entirely sure," he admitted awkwardly.

"Bullshit, Albus," her mother said, and Marlene looked up at her in surprise. Her mother never cursed. "You left us because you wanted to be with your wife. The question you should be answering is why you are here now, after so many years."

Albus looked at Minerva and Marlene, eyes full of sorrow. "Last night I had a dream it was quite powerful I'm not sure that it actually was a dream, but more of a vision..."

A woman was sitting on a small bed in an unfamiliar room, a young girl, around eight, sitting next to her. They were reading a book together it was an achingly beautiful scene. Suddenly, a ball of flame burst into the room, and Fawkes appeared. The woman looked up, and Albus realised that the woman was Minerva and that the girl must be their daughter.

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Minerva sighed, trying not to cry again. "That's Albus Dumbledore, Marlene," her mother told her.

*Marlene turned to the first page of the album, to an article titled **FORMER AUROR MCGONAGALL GIVES BIRTH TO DUMBLEDORE'S LOVE CHILD**. The article read as followed:*

According to a source, former Auror Minerva McGonagall, a key fighter against Grindelwald, gave birth to Albus Dumbledore's child on the 22nd of December 1945. Albus Dumbledore is the Deputy Headmaster, Head of Gryffindor House, and Professor of Transfiguration at Hogwarts. He is on the Wizengamot and was awarded the Order of Merlin, First Class, for his defeat of the Dark Wizard Grindelwald. He and his wife Colleen Longbottom are expecting their first child in April. They were married in June, after a very brief engagement.

According to our source, Miss McGonagall disappeared for two months after the last battle. While originally believed dead, we now know that was not the case. In light of these facts, we at the Daily Prophet have some questions: Where did she go? What was she doing? As she was not in contact with any member of the Ministry of Magic or any other member of the magical world during those two months, we must look at her integrity with a healthy dose of scepticism. Was this child a product of a loving relationship, a passionate tryst, or some form of Dark Magic? We at the Daily Prophet think the latter.

"Who is Minerva McGonagall?" Marlene asked.

"It's me," Minerva told her reluctantly.

"But your name is Jean McLeod!" Marlene said. "Not Minerva McGonagall!"

"No, darling, my name is Minerva Jean McGonagall. And your name isn't Marlene McLeod it's Lily Marlene McGonagall though it should be Lily Marlene McGonagall Dumbledore."

"So Albus Dumbledore is my father?" Marlene asked.

Her mother nodded and embraced her. "I'm sorry that I never told you, my darling," Minerva apologised.

"Why did you change our names?" Marlene asked.

"We're in hiding, my darling. Hiding from your father and from the Wizarding world."

"I've always wondered why we never met any wizards. Why is that? Why are we in hiding? And why are we hiding from my father, of all people?" Marlene cried.

"You read the article, my darling. That is what the Wizarding world thinks of me. But it's not true I did not use Dark Magic to conceive you. On the night before your father defeated Grindelwald, we made love, and you were conceived. After the battle, after Grindelwald was defeated, I was left at the battlefield to die. A Muggle man, Mr. Busse, found me and brought me back to his home, where he and his family cared for me for three months. I eventually found Alastor Moody, who had fought the final battle with me and your father, and he brought me back to London from Germany. When I arrived in London, I found out that I was pregnant with you. I went back to my family home and stayed there until you were born. I had to go to Saint Mungo's, the Wizarding hospital, because there were complications with your birth. After you were born, this article was published the only one who knew all of the information was Alastor Moody he betrayed me. After the article was published, your father came to see me. He told me that Alastor Moody had told him that I was dead. He had married another woman named Colleen Longbottom, and they have a son, named Albert, who is seven and a half now. He told me that although he loved me, he wanted to stay with his wife. The next day I had Prossy pack up our things and we moved here."

"Oh, Mummy," Marlene wailed, burying her face in her mother's lap. Now it was her mother's turn to be the comforter, and she stroked her daughter's hair, letting her own tears drop onto her daughter's bright auburn hair the hair she had inherited from her father.

During the recounting of his dream, Minerva's breathing had grown ragged and she was pressing a hand to her chest, trying to calm the spasmodic beats of her heart. Marlene, as well, was obviously distressed.

"It was a vision, then, wasn't it?" Albus asked Minerva quietly. She nodded, her hand still clutching her chest as Albus began to shed silent tears.

"How could I have done this to you, Minerva?" Albus asked her quietly. "I can't even remember when I abandoned you with any clarity... It feels as though I have been in a fog, and I am only now stepping out into the light..."

Minerva's face hardened. "Don't you dare try to excuse your actions, Albus you and I both know that you made them out of your own free will."

"I'm not sure that I did, Minerva!" Albus exclaimed, indignant that she wouldn't believe him, though he should have expected it. "It feels like I have been under a spell for the past ten years..." He trailed off as a flash of understanding dawned on his features. "My God... could it be? Could I really have been under a spell for all these years?"

"Albus?" Minerva asked tentatively as shock replaced the understanding that had so recently bloomed across his face. He didn't respond she wasn't sure if he had heard her. "Albus?" she asked again.

"That bastard..." Albus muttered, swiftly standing up from the bed and beginning to pace. "It was him my best friend... Alastor did this, Minerva!" he exclaimed, turning to her suddenly. "He must have he was the only one who knew about us... but why?" He continued to pace furiously, Minerva's worried eyes following his every step. Marlene had buried her head in her mother's lap, frightened by the sight of a furious Albus Dumbledore.

He turned toward her again and took hold of her shoulders, gripping them tightly. "I swear I will find out why he did this, Minerva. I swear he ruined our lives!"

"Albus, you're hurting me!" she cried out as his fingers dug into her flesh. He released his grip instantly, looking chagrined.

"I'm sorry, Minerva," he said, his entire demeanour changed. "I never meant to hurt you emotionally or physically. But believe me when I say that I will find out why Alastor has done this to us. I will I swear it." With that, he grabbed Fawkes's tail and Apparated away in a flash of flame, leaving Minerva and Marlene behind once again.

Chapter Nine: October 1953

Chapter 10 of 17

Albus confronts Alastor Moody and discovers what had been done to him; he returns to Minerva and explains.

Chapter Nine: October 1953

Albus appeared in Alastor Moody's bedroom in a flash of flame. Before Moody could respond to the intrusion, Albus had disarmed Alastor and Conjured up ropes, binding him to the bed. Albus's wand pointed at his throat.

"Why did you do this to me? To Minerva? To our daughter?" he hissed, his entire body trembling with fury. His robes whipped as a wind appeared in the room, a result of his magic beginning to lose control. Alastor quailed under Albus's furious gaze.

"Wha-what?" he stammered, trying to play dumb.

"Why did you do this to us?" he asked him again, more impatiently.

"Your mother told me to," he said, quaking under his glare.

"Continue," Albus growled.

"She offered me the position as Head of the Auror Department if I'd make sure that you wouldn't take up with Minerva. And when you did, I was to make sure that she wouldn't survive the battle. When she did survive, your mother told me to cast the Imperius Curse on you to make sure that you'd be happy with Colleen, and I did."

"My mother?" Albus shouted. "My mother did this?"

"Yes, she did," Alastor said.

"My God," Albus said, turning away from him for a moment. He walked over to the Floo, bent down, and tossed the sparkling powder into the fireplace, calling out "Kendra Dumbledore", and sticking his head into the flames.

"Hello, darling," his mother said, pulling a chair up to her fireplace. "How are you?"

"I know what you did, Mother," he said. "How could you?"

Kendra tried to laugh off her son's accusations. "What in Merlin's name are you going on about, Albus?" she asked him, laughing nervously.

"Why did you have Alastor try to have Minerva killed? And why did you have him cast the Imperius Curse on me so that I'd be 'happy' with Colleen? How could you, Mother?"

As Albus shouted at her, his mother's countenance changed from an indulgent mother to a stern, flinty matriarch.

"The real question is how could you, Albus? Taking up with that McGonagall girl would ruin our family's reputation! How could you, Albus?"

"Congratulations, Mother," he snapped. "You have ruined the lives of three people: myself, Minerva, and our daughter. And Merlin help me if I ever find out that you have tried to manipulate my life again. Don't ever come near us again." He pulled his head out of the flames, his mother's shocked, angry expression burned on his brain.

He turned back into the room, facing Alastor again. "Don't ever come near me – or Minerva and our daughter – again," he hissed, throwing his wand on Alastor's nightstand. "Fawkes!" Albus called, and the phoenix appeared. Albus grabbed his tail, and he and the phoenix disappeared in a burst of flame, leaving Alastor tied on the bed.

Once more, a fireball appeared in Minerva's bedroom, and Minerva looked up from her bed, her face tearstained. She was cradling their sleeping daughter in her arms, stroking her hair. Albus came over to the bed, kneeling at Minerva's side.

"My mother had Alastor put the Imperius Curse on me," he whispered, his voice full of anger.

"Your mother?" she asked, shocked, forgetting to whisper. Their daughter stirred in her arms.

He nodded. "My mother did not want us to be together; she had Alastor leave you at the battlefield in hopes that you would die; she had him do everything it took to keep

us apart.”

“But why?” Minerva whispered, distraught.

“Because she thought that if we were together, it would ruin the Dumbledore reputation,” he spat out. “I told her – and Alastor too – to never come near us again. I will never forgive them for the pain they caused us.”

Albus reached out tentatively and took her hand; she allowed him to entwine his fingers with hers.

“Everything will be different from now on, Minerva,” he whispered. “I promise.”

“I hope so, Albus,” she said. “I hope so.”

She moved over on the bed and patted the now-empty space. He looked at her with questioning eyes, and she nodded. He smiled at her tentatively, and she returned his smile, leaning her head against his shoulder. He placed a light kiss on the top of her head.

“I love you, Minerva,” he whispered.

“And I love you,” she replied.

The next morning, Marlene woke up to a sight she had never seen before – both of her parents together. Her mother had her head resting on Albus’s shoulder, and he had his arm around her. Quietly, carefully, she got out of bed and left the room, writing a note to her parents and placing it on the kitchen table before getting dressed and going down to the shore, allowing her parents some much-needed alone time.

A few hours later, Albus stirred, waking up from the most peaceful night’s rest he’d had in years. He tightened his embrace, and she sighed contentedly before waking up herself.

“Is this a dream?” she murmured, burying her face in his beard.

“No, it’s not,” he said, tilting her face up so that he could kiss her lips lightly. Still not fully awake, she returned his kiss without any reservations, turning in his arms to embrace him fully. She moaned as his tongue sought entrance into her mouth, and she granted him access. He rolled her over, bringing one hand to the back of her neck to undo the clasp of her nightgown; she brought her hands to the front of his robes, trying to unfasten them.

Suddenly, their clothes were gone, Vanished by Albus as a result of wandless magic, and he kissed her again, drawing her tongue into his mouth as he entered her. She arched her back, her moans muffled as they continued to kiss, and she began to come as he brought one hand to her clitoris, rubbing it as he thrust within her.

They broke out of the kiss to breathe, and she cried out to him. “Albus!”

“Oh, Minerva,” he moaned as he pushed into her one final time before he climaxed.

He collapsed on top of her, and she held him tightly in her arms. Waving his hand, the sheets came up from the foot of the bed and covered them. He rolled over, bringing her with him, and she snuggled into his warmth. She smiled against his chest.

“I love you, Minerva,” he said. “I am so sorry for everything; so sorry. Can you ever forgive me?”

“I’ll forgive you,” she whispered. “As long as you come back to me.”

“I’ll never leave you again, my love,” he told her. “As long as it is in my power, I’ll never leave you again.”

“Good,” she said. Good.”

Chapter Ten: October to November 1953

Chapter 11 of 17

Albus and Colleen discuss their marriage; Minerva and Albus discuss what will happen with them.

Chapter Ten: October to November 1953

After making love, Albus and Minerva got dressed and went out into the kitchen of the cottage, where they found the note Marlene had written for them. Minerva read it aloud: “Dear Mummy,” she read, “I went out for a walk along the shore. I love you, Marlene.” Minerva finished reading the note and set it back down on the kitchen table, turning to Albus.

“What are we going to do next?” she asked him, sitting down at the table, her head in her hands. “Are we going to tell Marlene the truth about what happened?”

Albus sat down as well. “I think that we should tell her the truth, Minerva,” he said, taking her hand.

She looked at him. “What are you going to tell your wife? When are you going to tell her? And what about your son?” she asked him.

“As soon as we tell Marlene, I will go back to Hogwarts and tell my wife what happened. As for my son I’ll tell him the truth, I suppose. I’m not sure what I’ll tell him. And then I’ll come back. But what will happen with us? I need to be at Hogwarts I have a house in Hogsmeade that you could live in, I suppose, but I’m not sure how much you would enjoy that.”

“And I have my job here, as a teacher,” Minerva said.

“We can figure it out when I return,” Albus suggested.

“All right,” Minerva acquiesced. “Let’s go tell Marlene,” she said.

Albus nodded, and he stood up, extending a hand to help her up from her chair. She smiled at him, and she grabbed a shawl from the hook near the front door. Wrapping it

around her, she opened the door and took his hand, walking towards the shore, where they found Marlene sitting on a large rock, looking at the waves crashing on the shore.

"Marlene, sweetheart?" Minerva called as they approached the rock.

Her daughter looked up. "Yes, Mummy?" she said, hopping down from the rock and approaching her mother and her father.

"Marlene, your mother and I have something to tell you," Albus said.

"Yes?" she asked.

"I left you and your mother not out of my free will, but because I was under the Imperius Curse. It was cast on me by one of my closest and most trusted friends, because my *mother*" he spat out, "hired him to try to kill your mother, and hired him to cast the Imperius Curse on me so that I would marry my wife. But," he continued, "I'm going to divorce her and marry your mother."

Marlene nodded. "So, will we stay here?" she asked her parents calmly.

"We're not sure yet, sweetheart," her mother said.

"All right," Marlene replied.

Her mother embraced her, letting tears drop into her daughter's bright auburn hair. "Thank you for taking this so well, darling," her mother told her.

Marlene hugged her back. "I love you, Mummy," she said.

Her mother kissed the top of her head. "I love you too, my darling."

Marlene pulled back from her mother's embrace to look at her father. "I love you, Daddy," she told him, causing tears to come to his eyes.

He hugged her. "And I love you, Marlene."

An hour later, Albus left Minerva and Marlene at their cottage in the Hebrides and Apparated back to Hogwarts. He walked up to the chambers he shared with his wife and son and threw open the door. His wife was sitting on the couch, her hands folded in her lap, and his son was nowhere to be found.

"I want a divorce, Albus," she said.

He stared at her, completely nonplussed. "All right," he agreed. "On what grounds?"

"Infidelity," she stated. "I know that you were with that McGonagall girl for the past few days and I won't stand for it. And I know that you have a child with her. I'm not going to be 'the other woman' in your life. I'm leaving you, and I don't ever want to hear from you again," she told him.

"I want shared custody of Albert," Albus said.

"Fine," she said. "You can see him during the summers, but that is all. And don't try to fight me your mother is on my side, and if we go to court, then you won't get custody at all. And I want alimony," she said.

"All right," he told her, agreeing with her demands, knowing that he had no other choice.

"Good," she said, standing up and entering their bedroom. When she returned, she had several carpetbags floating in front of her. Opening one, she pointed her wand at several items in the sitting room, and they flew in to her bag. "I've already packed Albert's things," Colleen continued, "and we'll be going to my parents' house. Don't try to come see us."

"Can't I say goodbye to Albert?" Albus asked.

"All right," she agreed reluctantly and entered Albert's room. She emerged with their son in her arms.

"Albert, we're going to live with your grandparents for a while," Colleen told him. "Say goodbye to Daddy."

"Goodbye, Daddy," Albus's son said, giving him a hug. Albus choked back tears and kissed the top of his son's head several times.

"Goodbye, Albert," Albus said. "I love you so much."

Colleen took Albert out of Albus's arms and Summoned a quill to her, touching it lightly with her wand and saying *Portus*. It glowed blue for a moment before she picked it up. "Goodbye, Albus," she said, and she and Albert disappeared before Albus could respond.

Albus went to his desk and wrote a letter to Minerva.

My dearest love,

Colleen has left me she's taken Albert. I cannot leave the school at the moment can you come here? This note is a Portkey just tap it with your wand and say "Hogwarts." We need to discuss what is going to happen next.

All my love,

Albus.

Tapping the note with his wand, it glowed blue, turning the note into a Portkey. He stroked Fawkes's plumage before handing him the note. Fawkes took it in his beak and rubbed his head against Albus's hand before disappearing in a flash of flame, reappearing in Minerva's kitchen, where she and Marlene were having lunch.

"Hello again, Fawkes," Minerva said, taking the note from his beak. He cooed, flying over to Marlene and rubbing his head against her shoulder. She stroked his plumage while her mother read the note from Albus.

"Sweetheart, I need to go to Hogwarts for to talk with your father," Minerva said.

Marlene looked up at her calmly. "All right, Mummy," she said.

"Will you be all right here, darling?" Minerva asked.

Marlene nodded. "Prossy will be here if I need anything," she reassured her mother.

"All right, dear," Minerva said. "Hogwarts!" she said, tapping the note with her wand. She felt a pull behind her navel and disappeared, reappearing at the gates of Hogwarts.

Minerva was overwhelmed by the memories that she had of this place as she walked up the path to the castle. She had spent some of the best years of her life here, and she realised just how much she had missed being a part of the Wizarding world.

Albus met her at the top of the main staircase.

"Hello, my dear," he said, kissing Minerva lightly on the lips. He extended his arm, and Minerva linked hers through his, smiling up at him. He led her to his chambers, and they settled themselves in his parlour.

"I want us to move here with you," Minerva said.

Albus smiled broadly. "I want you two to move here, too," he said, beaming at her. "I want us to be a family. Can you move in tonight?" he asked her excitedly.

"Yes," she said, smiling as he took her hand and kissed it. "I love you, Albus," she said.

"And I love you, Minerva," he replied. "I love you."

He began kissing her, pulling her towards him, and she wrapped her arms around his neck, returning his kisses. He pulled her robes away from her body and began kissing her bare skin.

"I love you so much, Albus," she whispered, moaning as he completely disrobed her and began fondling her breasts. She did the same, pushing his robes off his shoulders, and began to stroke his bare chest.

"Minerva..." he groaned as she flicked his beard over his shoulder and trailed one hand down to his erection, stroking it lightly. "Oh, Minerva..."

She pushed him back against the couch and straddled him. He gripped her hips tightly and pulled her down on top of him. Placing her hands on his chest, she began to rise and fall on top of him.

"Oh God, Albus, Albus, Albus!" she cried as she began to come.

"Minerva!" he cried out as he pulled her down on top of him one more time. She collapsed on top of him, and he wrapped his arms around her, holding her to him.

"I love you, Albus," she whispered.

"And I love you, Minerva," he replied. "I love you."

Chapter Eleven: June 1954

Chapter 12 of 17

Albus's son meets Minerva and Marlene; Albus learns something surprising about his ex-wife.

Chapter Eleven: June 1954

It had been seven months since Colleen had left Albus, seven months since Minerva and Marlene had moved to Hogwarts, seven months since Albus had seen his son. His divorce from Colleen had finally gone through, and he was going to marry Minerva on the fourteenth of June. Today, though, he would finally be seeing his son for the first time in seven months. Albus's ex-wife would be bringing Albert to the castle so that he could spend the summer with his father.

Albus was so excited to see his son again, and when his wife appeared at the gates with their son in her arms, he rushed to them.

"Hello, Colleen," Albus said coldly.

"Hello, Albus," she replied, equally as cool.

"Daddy!" Albert cried, stretching his arms out to his father. Albus took his son from his ex-wife's arms and gave him a kiss on the top of his head.

"Hello, Albert," Albus said, hugging his son close. He looked over his son's head to catch his wife's eye.

"I'll see you in three months, Colleen," he said.

"All right," she replied, kissing their son on his forehead. "I love you, Albert," she whispered, tears in her eyes, before turning and Disapparating away.

Albus and his son walked hand-in-hand up to the castle to their chambers, where Minerva and Marlene were waiting for them. When they entered their chambers, Albus and Albert were greeted with a cheerful lunch set up in the parlour.

Minerva stood as Albert and Albus entered the room. "Hello, Albert," Minerva said sweetly, extending her hand. "I'm Minerva."

Albert took her hand gravely. "Hello, Minerva," he said, quite seriously for an eight-year-old.

Marlene stood up behind her mother and mimicked her, extending her hand. "And I'm Marlene, your sister," she said shyly.

"Hello, Marlene, I'm Albert," he said, shaking her hand.

Albus and Minerva watched their children as they stood with their arms wrapped around each other.

Marlene and Albert sat down at the table, and Albus and Minerva joined them. The house-elves brought in their lunch, and Minerva and Marlene got to know Albert better. After lunch, Albert and Marlene went out to the Quidditch pitch to fly while Minerva and Albus went to bed.

Several hours later, Marlene and Albert returned from flying and found Albus and Minerva sitting in the parlour, reading.

"Hello, Mummy, Daddy," Marlene said.

"Hello, darlings," Minerva said. "Did you have a nice time?"

"Yes, we did," Albert replied.

"Albert's quite good at flying!" Marlene told her mother excitedly. "He can do all kinds of tricks on his broom."

"Well, I hope that you are being careful, Albert," Minerva said.

"Don't be so stuffy, Mummy," her daughter said. Minerva raised her eyebrows as her daughter giggled.

"Albert," Albus said, his tone serious. "Please do be careful," he told his son, who nodded.

"All right, then!" Minerva exclaimed. "Would you two like some lemonade?"

"Yes, please!" they exclaimed, and Minerva called for a house-elf, who brought them a pitcher of lemonade and four glasses. Minerva poured out the drink and passed them each a glass.

As they sat in their parlour sipping their lemonade, Albus grew serious.

"Albert, I want you to know that I am going to marry Minerva in two week's time," he told his son.

"I know," his son replied calmly. "Marlene told me."

"This means that your mother and I will never be married again," Albus told him gently.

"Oh, I know that," Albert said. "Mummy told me that when she married Evan."

Albus spat his mouthful of lemonade across the room. "What?!" he sputtered. "Your mother remarried? When?"

"At Christmas," Albert replied.

"Who did she marry?" Albus asked him.

"Evan Travers," his son said.

"Oh," was all that Albus could say.

"Why don't we go down to the village?" Minerva suggested to the two children, who nodded. She ushered them out of the door. "I'll be there in a moment," she called after them and joined Albus on the sofa.

"I'm sorry, darling," she whispered, giving him a kiss on his lips.

He held her to him almost desperately. "Was she seeing him when we were married?" he asked her.

"Does it matter?" she asked him. "She's out of our lives now."

"But is that why she wanted the divorce? So she could marry someone else?" he asked her.

"It doesn't matter, darling," she soothed him, stroking his hair. "Just try to calm down – we'll be back for dinner, all right?" He nodded. "All right – I love you, Albus – please don't ever forget that."

"I won't," he promised her. "Have a good time," he said. "I love you."

"And I love you," she said, giving him a kiss before walking towards the door. She blew him a kiss and left, headed to Hogsmeade with her daughter and soon-to-be-stepson.

Colleen was so pleased that everything had worked out for the best – she was rid of Albus and married to the man that she had loved for years. It could not have worked out better if she had planned it. She sighed happily. Everything was right with the world.

Albus could not believe that his ex-wife had remarried so soon after their divorce. He suspected that she had used his moment of infidelity as an excuse to get him to agree to give her custody of Albert, as well as alimony. But what could he do? He could confront her, but his mother would take her side, and he would not risk losing the little amount of time that he had with his son. When Minerva returned, he would discuss it with her. He could only hope that it would work out for the best.

Chapter Twelve: June 1954

Chapter 13 of 17

Albus confronts Colleen and finds out something shocking.

Chapter Twelve: June 1954

Minerva, Marlene, and Albert returned from Hogsmeade much later that evening, after having supper at the Three Broomsticks. When they returned, Marlene and Albert were bundled off to get ready for bed. Albus was still sitting in the parlour where they had left him. Minerva joined him.

"You've got to confront Colleen, Albus," Minerva said, joining him on the sofa.

"I know," Albus said, his head buried in his hands.

"Go tonight, after we tuck the children in," Minerva urged him.

"All right," Albus agreed reluctantly, just as Marlene and Albert filed in, neatly attired in dressing gowns.

"Good night, Mummy, good night, Daddy," Marlene said, walking over and pecking her mother and father on the cheek.

"Good night, Minerva, good night, Daddy," Albert added, kissing them each on the cheek as well.

"I'll tuck you in," Minerva said, standing up from the sofa and extending her hands to the two children. She led them to their bedrooms and said good night before rejoining Albus.

"I'll go now," Albus said, standing up and kissing Minerva.

"Good luck, Albus," she said. "I love you."

"And I love you, Minerva," he said, before walking to the fireplace. He threw a handful of Floo powder into the fireplace and stepped into the emerald green flames.

A few seconds later, he stepped into his ex-wife's home. She was sitting on the sofa, reading, and looked up in shock when Albus stepped out of the Floo.

"Albus! What are you doing here?" she asked, utterly shocked.

"I know that you got married, Colleen," he said.

"Well, you had to find out sooner or later," she replied calmly, setting her book aside.

"I'm no longer going to pay alimony, Colleen," he declared.

She smiled smugly. "You will continue to pay alimony if you want custody of my son," she said.

"Wait – your son?" he asked. "Not our son?"

Colleen looked down nervously, avoiding his gaze.

"Albert is not my son?" he asked her, utterly furious.

Colleen closed her eyes, hiding her face in her hands.

Albus towered over her, fury radiating from every pore of his body.

"No, he's not your son!" Colleen exclaimed, utterly terrified, cowering in the corner of the sofa. "He's not," she repeated. "He's not."

"I cannot believe you!" Albus yelled. "You – you lying... ugh!"

"Please, Albus, don't hurt me," she whimpered, curling up into a ball.

"I won't hurt you, Colleen – you're not worth my energy," he spat, turning on his heel, walking to the fireplace. He paused before he threw in the handful of Floo powder. "I'll be back tomorrow," he said, before stepping into the emerald flames.

Minerva was waiting for him on the sofa.

"Albert's not my son," Albus said.

Minerva's eyes widened; her hand flew to her breast in shock. "What on earth do you mean?" she asked him.

"He's not my son. Colleen cheated on me – Albert is not my son," Albus said, collapsing on the sofa. His magic literally crackled with anger and sadness, and Minerva was afraid to touch him in comfort.

"You're not my daddy?" Albert said, stepping out of the doorway. Both Albus and Minerva looked up at him.

"No, I'm not," Albus replied heavily. Albert's lower lip trembled, and tears began to fall down his face. Minerva rushed to his side, embracing the sobbing boy. She looked over his head to Albus, who was still on the couch, his head in his hand.

"Let's go to bed now," Minerva said, leading Albert down the hallway to his room. She tucked him in once more.

"Minerva, does Daddy still love me?" he asked her between his tears.

"Of course he does," Minerva soothed him.

Albert hiccupped as his sobs slowed. "Who is my father, then?" he asked.

"I don't know," Minerva admitted. "Now, get some rest. We have a difficult day ahead of us."

He nodded and closed his eyes obediently, and Minerva left the room to rejoin Albus.

"What can I do, Minerva?" he asked her as she stroked his hair gently.

"Do you still love him?" she asked.

"Of course! I thought that he was my son for years; I can't change that in a night," Albus replied.

"Then continue to treat him as a son, and everything will be fine," Minerva said.

"I won't be able to have custody of him, though," he said.

"We'll see," Minerva replied, standing up from the couch. "Let's go to bed – we'll have a long day in store for us tomorrow." He allowed her to lead him to their bedroom, but could not fall asleep.

The next morning, Albus Flooed to Colleen's house once again. She was prepared for him this time.

"Good morning, Colleen," he said coldly.

"Good morning, Albus," she replied timidly.

"I still want custody of Albert," Albus said.

"No," she said firmly. "He's not your son, and you have no legal right to custody of him."

"Then I'll see you in court," Albus said.

"Fine," she spat. Albus stood up and walked over to the fireplace, throwing a pinch of Floo powder into the fireplace. "Hogwarts," he said, and stepped into the flames.

Jun-55

Chapter 14 of 17

The custody case between Colleen and Albus over Albert comes to an end.

Chapter Thirteen: June 1955

A year later, the custody case was finally coming to an end as the Minister of Magic, Kermit Gamp, banged down the gavel.

"Custody of the child is granted to Colleen Longbottom Travers," he declared.

Albus glared at Colleen, who stood with Albert, her arm possessively draped around her son's shoulders. He walked over to Albert, and, bending down, extended his arms. Albert stepped into them, crying.

"Goodbye, Albert," Albus said, wiping away a few stray tears.

"Goodbye, Daddy," Albert said, sobbing.

Colleen pulled her son out of Albus's embrace.

"Goodbye, Albus," Colleen said, a gloating smile on her face.

"Goodbye, Colleen; goodbye, Albert," Albus said. "I love you, Albert."

"I love you, Daddy," Albert replied as his mother pulled him away from the man he had thought was his father.

Albus stood there and watched as his son and his ex-wife disappeared. After they had gone, Albus Flooed back to their living room at Hogwarts, where his wife and daughter were waiting for him.

"I lost the case," Albus said sadly, tears still slipping down his face. He joined Minerva on the couch and rested his head against her shoulder.

"Oh, Albus," Minerva sighed, stroking his hair lightly. She could feel his body shaking with sobs. Marlene looked at her parents before standing up and exiting the room quietly. Marlene went to her room and flopped down on the bed, crying.

She missed Albert – he had been her best friend. And now she would never see him again; well, until they started at Hogwarts. But that was a year away from now! Marlene had never been good at making friends, but she and Albert had been close from the moment they had met. Why did Colleen have to win the custody case? It was not fair – to Albert, to her, or to her father.

"Oh, Albus," Minerva said, stroking his hair. "I'm so sorry."

"I can't believe I lost..." he said between tears.

"I know, darling," she soothed him. "I am sorry."

"Minerva, promise that you and Marlene will never leave me," he begged her.

"I promise, Albus," she said. "We'll never leave you."

"Thank you," Albus said, his tears slowing a bit.

"Let's go to bed, hmm?" she asked, and he raised his head, tears streaking his cheeks. He nodded, and she stood, extending her hand to help him up. He held her hand to her cheek for a moment, closing his eyes.

"I love you, Minerva," he said.

"I love you, Albus," she replied.

She led him into the bedroom, and he kicked off his shoes while she turned down the covers. Crawling between the sheets, he looked up at her.

"Go to sleep, Albus," she said. "I'm just going to talk to Marlene; I'll be back shortly."

"All right, Min," he said. He closed his eyes, and she kissed his forehead lightly before exiting the room.

She knocked lightly on Marlene's door.

"Go away," her daughter said.

"Marlene, I need to talk to you," Minerva said.

"Fine," Marlene replied.

Minerva opened the door and saw her daughter stretched out on her bed, tears in her eyes. Minerva sat down next to her and began to stroke her daughter's hair.

"I'm so sorry, Marlene," Minerva whispered, and Marlene began to sob in earnest, flinging herself into her mother's arms. "Shh, darling, it'll be all right," she soothed her child, rubbing her back. They stayed there for quite a long time, until Marlene finally fell asleep. Minerva tucked her daughter in and, kissing her lightly on the forehead, went back to her bedroom, to check that her husband was still sleeping. He was, and she went to the kitchen to make a cup of tea.

Sitting down at the table, she sipped her tea, trying not to think about losing Albert. Colleen didn't deserve such a wonderful son. Colleen was a horrible woman, and, though Minerva tried not to hate anyone, she made an exception for Colleen. She was a class-A bitch, and she had done her best to ruin their lives – and she had been quite successful in her attempts, too. But Minerva vowed, then and there, that she would do everything in her power to make sure that Colleen would never hurt them again.

Jun-56

Chapter 15 of 17

Marlene begins at Hogwarts; Minerva starts teaching at Hogwarts.

Chapter Fourteen: June 1956

Marlene received her Hogwarts letter in June, and straight away Minerva and Albus took their daughter to Diagon Alley to get her school supplies. As Minerva and Albus lived at Hogwarts, Marlene decided not to get an owl as her pet, but a cat – a ginger tabby that she named Dinah, after Alice's cat in *Alice in Wonderland*.

One of their last stops was at Ollivander's Wand Shoppe. Ollivander had always disturbed Minerva – he seemed to know so much more than he let on.

"Ah, Lily McGonagall," he said to Marlene. "I expect great things from you. I remember when your mother came in here, so many years ago," he nodded to Minerva, "Mahogany, twelve inches, with a core of a unicorn hair. Good for Transfiguration, obviously," he said, his shiny silver eyes regarding Minerva. He turned his attention back to Marlene.

"Try this one. Willow, with a unicorn hair core." She picked it up, and he snatched it out of her hand immediately. "Rosewood with phoenix feather," he said, placing it in her hand. Again, he snatched it out of her hand. "Mahogany with a phoenix feather," he said. Once more, the wand was taken out of her hand. "Elder wood with a unicorn tail hair," he said, and sparks shot out the end of her wand, a warm feeling spreading throughout her body. "That's the one," he said.

Minerva beamed proudly at her daughter. They paid for the wand and left the shop. Albus was waiting for them, holding their purchases at Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour.

"I got my wand, Daddy," Marlene said proudly, taking it out for him to see. "Ten and a half inches, elder wood, with a unicorn tail hair," she said.

He examined it. "Congratulations, my dear," he said, giving her a kiss on her forehead. "Now, what type of ice cream would you like?" he asked her.

"Ooh, chocolate!" she exclaimed. Albus smiled at her. "All right. And Minerva?" he asked, smiling at his wife.

"Vanilla, please, Albus," she said. He stood up.

"I'll get the ice cream," he said and went inside. A few minutes later, he emerged, three bowls of ice cream floating in front of him. He set them down on the table, and the Dumbledores enjoyed their ice cream.

In the past year, Minerva had researched ancient protection spells that would keep her daughter safe from the wrath of Colleen. She finally found a series of spells and, with both Marlene's and Albus's consent, she performed them. These spells would protect Marlene from anything that Colleen would attempt to do to her. So at least her daughter was safe.

In August, the school was notified that Albert would not be attending Hogwarts that year; rather, he would be attending Durmstrang. Colleen and her new husband, Evan Travers, had relocated to Bulgaria, where Durmstrang was located. Marlene was devastated – she missed Albert, missed the brother that she had had for such a short period of time.

Marlene tried to write to him, but the letter was brought back by the owl she had sent the letter with. Albus suggested that she use Fawkes, but Fawkes was unable to deliver the letter too. She was utterly crushed. Minerva and Albus tried to comfort her, but it was to no avail – she refused to talk about it.

September came all too soon, and Marlene began school. Minerva attended the Sorting Feast and was so proud when her daughter was sorted into Gryffindor. Marlene was an excellent student, particularly excelling at Transfiguration. She was her parents' daughter, after all.

In December, the Headmaster of Hogwarts, Armando Dippet, died as the result of pneumonia. Albus, as the Deputy Headmaster, became the new Headmaster, and Minerva applied for the positions of Deputy Headmistress, Head of Gryffindor House, and Professor of Transfiguration. As Albus had a conflict of interest in her hiring, Minerva had to be approved by the Board of Governors, which she was. Minerva began in the second week of December. It was difficult at first for Marlene to adjust to calling her mother "Professor McGonagall", but she managed. She loved having her mother as a professor, as she was a good and fair teacher.

Minerva settled into life as a member of the Hogwarts staff quite nicely. Some of her old school friends – Pomona Sprout and Rolanda Hooch – had also begun teaching at Hogwarts. And, of course, she worked very closely with her husband, which was wonderful.

While she and Albus did not always agree and had quite a few arguments, they loved and respected each other, so they worked well together. It was wonderful, and all of them were happy. The world was at peace, and so were they – at least for now.

June 1963 - June 1966

Chapter 16 of 17

Marlene graduates from Hogwarts; Albus makes a difficult decision regarding his relationship with Minerva.

Chapter 15: June 1963 – June 1966

The seven years of Marlene's schooling passed very quickly. Marlene was one of their brightest students, and she topped her class. She was made Head Girl (though both Minerva and Albus had a conflict of interest, obviously, the other Heads of Houses had agreed with their decision to make Marlene the Head Girl). The Head Boy was Robert McKinnon, a Ravenclaw. During Marlene's final year of Hogwarts, she and Robert began seeing each other. They were perfectly suited to each other – both were clever, kind, and intellectual. After their graduation, Robert and Marlene got engaged. They were both on their way to becoming Aurors. They had three years of training to undertake, after which they had decided they would marry.

Minerva and Albus were very happy with their daughter's choice of a husband – Robert was a lovely boy, and they both liked him very much. They were also pleased with Marlene's choice to become an Auror – a career which they felt suited her perfectly. Even as a girl, she wanted to protect people.

Privately, all was not well with Albus. He was growing suspicious of Tom Riddle's activities. He had been working at Borgin & Burkes, but several years ago he had disappeared. He had heard rumours of his presence in Albania, studying the Dark Arts. Albus was worried that Tom would become the next Grindelwald. He was also worried that he would target Minerva and Marlene by virtue of their association with him.

Albus had also been keeping tabs on the boy who he had once thought was his son. Albert's last name had been changed to Travers. Albert, unfortunately, had not done as well in school as Marlene had – he had barely graduated Durmstrang, though according to his sources, he was quite proficient in the Dark Arts. After his graduation, he had left for the Continent, heading towards Albania.

He was worried that Albert would foster an association with Tom Riddle – after all, his son's biological father had been a supporter of Grindelwald. Albus strongly suspected that Albert resented him for leaving him, though it had not been his choice. And Albus suspected that Colleen had filled Albert's head with lies about him, Minerva, and Marlene.

Albus knew this peace could not last, knew that this idyllic time would some come to an end. He was worried about Minerva and Marlene. Albus didn't know what to do – he wanted to protect his family, and the only way he could do that would be to sever all ties with them. But he loved them so much... He decided to wait and see what would happen with Tom Riddle. Perhaps he would never return to Britain. (Albus knew that this was most likely untrue, but he could hope.)

Minerva was worried about her husband. He had been incredibly preoccupied lately, which was worrisome. She tried to get him to talk about it, but he refused. She was desperate – he was becoming increasingly withdrawn, refusing to talk to her about his problems.

She tried to get Nicholas Flamel to Albus, but Albus refused to confide in him. Aberforth even made the effort to talk to his brother (they had fallen out after Ariana's death), but while Albus appreciated his brother's effort, he refused to talk to him as well.

Minerva was desperate – the distance between them was growing all the wider. And by the time their daughter finished her Auror training, the chasm was almost unable to be breached.

Three months after their graduation, Marlene and Robert were married in a small, private ceremony at Hogwarts, Albus presiding over the ceremony. Marlene looked absolutely radiant – she wore a beautiful set of white silk robes and carried a bouquet of white roses. Robert also looked very handsome and very happy to be marrying Marlene.

After their wedding, Marlene and Robert went on honeymoon to France. They had two weeks' leave, so they would be staying in France for a week and a half before returning to their new home. Minerva and Albus had purchased a comfortable home in the Wizarding neighbourhood of Cramond, right outside of Edinburgh. It was a comfortable home, set a bit apart from the others, and Minerva and Albus had made it as safe as they could, setting up dozens of wards.

After they had finished setting up their daughter and son-in-law's new home, they returned to Hogwarts. Albus immediately went to his office to do work. Minerva went to their rooms. It had been such a depressing week – her daughter was married, had her own home, and her husband was barely speaking to her. She didn't know what to do – she had tried everything.

Albus was sitting in his office, head in his hands. It couldn't go on like this any longer – he couldn't bear to watch Minerva suffer. He had heard of Tom Riddle's increased activities in Albania – he was now calling himself Lord Voldemort. And he had heard that Albert had become one of his biggest supporters.

He would have to force Minerva to leave him. He wanted her to be safe. Marlene was as safe as she could be – she was an Auror, as was her husband, and Albus felt confident that she would be all right. But though Minerva too had been an Auror, she was his wife, and he knew that Tom would go after her first – especially as Tom had had a crush on her when they were in school together. He would have to get her to leave him or would have to leave her. Albus didn't want to hurt her... but he had to hurt her to protect her.

June 1972 – 12 December 1975

Chapter 17 of 17

The Order of the Phoenix is revived; Voldemort's return has consequences for the Dumbledore family.

Chapter 16: June 1972 – 12 December 1975

A/N: The last chapter. Thank you SO MUCH to all my readers/reviewers – I appreciate it more than you possibly know. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!

He had done it. It had taken over five years, but he had finally, finally pushed her away. She would be safe now, he believed, safe from Tom Riddle (who was now calling himself Lord Voldemort), safe from his enemies.

She had clung to him in desperation, trying to keep him with her, and it had broken his heart to pull away from her. But pull away he did.

They still worked together; Minerva was still his Deputy, Head of Gryffindor House, and Professor of Transfiguration, but no longer his wife.

He missed her, oh! how he missed her, but he knew it was for the best. No one would bother to hurt her if they believed that he didn't love her anymore. He had publicised their divorce, going so far as to grant interviews to reporters in the *Daily Prophet*. It pained him that he had to hurt her so badly and so publically, but it was necessary.

Minerva withdrew into herself, becoming stern, unemotional, aloof – and if his heart had not been broken yet, it would have been, seeing her now. Yet she never allowed her feelings to get in the way of her work – neither her work at Hogwarts nor her work with the Order of the Phoenix.

Yes, he had revived the Order – it was absolutely necessary in these increasingly dark times. And Minerva, of course, had insisted on joining – as had their daughter and her husband. Albus didn't want Marlene to join, wanted to keep her out of the war, but he knew that they needed all the help that they could get – even the help of a pregnant Auror.

Yes, Marlene was pregnant with their grandchild. Both Albus and Minerva were ecstatic, though both Marlene and Minerva were barely speaking to Albus. Nonetheless, he was thrilled and vowed to do everything he could to make sure their grandchild was safe.

The months passed, and Marlene gave birth to a beautiful baby boy in February. They named their child Frederick Kieran McKinnon. Marlene only let her father see his grandson at Order meetings, punishing him for leaving her mother. She was angry with him – he had left Minerva once before, and now once again. Her mother deserved better, Marlene told Albus; she didn't deserve to be treated like chattel. He couldn't explain to Marlene or to Minerva why he had left her, and so their anger continued.

And then, December 12th, 1975, the worst possible news came.

"Minerva!" he yelled, bursting into her private chambers. She was getting ready for bed – her hair was down, and she had only a thin dressing gown wrapped around her slender frame.

"Albus! What on earth are you doing here?" she asked him, pulling her dressing gown tighter.

"Minerva – the Dark Mark," he gasped, out of breath from running to her chambers.

Her hands dropped from where they had been clutching her dressing gown. "Where?" she asked, though she knew where. Albus would never have burst into her chambers if it had been anywhere else. "Oh, God, please not..."

"At Cramond," he said, and she let out a wail of anguish. A few moments later, she recovered, picking up her wand and running out of the castle, Albus in close pursuit.

As soon as they reached the gates, they Apparated to Cramond. She immediately transformed into her Animagus form, running as fast as she could to the house. He found her cradling the dead body of their daughter.

"She's dead, she's dead, my baby, my only child, she's dead," Minerva moaned in grief, rocking the body gently in her arms. Albus knelt down beside her, wrapping his arms around her as his tears joined hers. She turned a teary, broken-hearted gaze on him.

"How could they do this to her, Albus? How?"

Albus shook his head, wiping away the few tears that escaped. He stood and made his way upstairs.

As he expected, he saw the body of a man lying stretched out on the landing, obviously caught while rushing downstairs to see what had happened. He continued his way upstairs, pausing before entering the room whose door was ajar.

It was his grandchild's room, decorated in blues and yellows. Numerous toys littered the ground, and books were overflowing from the too-full bookcase. Lying in the small bed was their grandson, Frederick. He was not even three years old. Albus walked up to him and took the boy's wrist between his long fingers, checking for a pulse. Nothing. He made his way downstairs again.

Minerva was still sobbing over their daughter's body, and it took Albus quite some time to get her attention.

"Robert and Frederick are dead, as well," he told her sombrely. As much as he wanted to spare her the pain, he knew that he could not, but that did not stop his heart from aching as the woman let out another grieving wail.

"They cannot all be dead, Albus," she said. "They cannot all be dead. It is not fair!"

He picked her up from her spot on the floor, ignoring her protests and attempts to get out of his arms.

"You need to rest, Minerva," he told her. "You need to rest so you can be strong enough to handle the pain."

She burrowed her head into his chest, as though she tried to escape his words. He walked silently to the edge of the property, still holding her in his arms, and Disapparated away.

She was never the same again, never.

They found out, a year later, that the Death Eater who had killed them was Albert Travers, the boy who Albus had believed was his son for so many years.

"I did it because I hated her," Albert spat when Albus went to visit him in Azkaban.

"You two were so close as children," Albus said.

"Yes, until that bitch took my place – she took my only chance at a happy family!" he yelled.

"Albert, she never took your place," Albus said.

"Don't lie to me – I know she did. I was there."

Albus closed his eyes in an attempt to block the pain – it didn't work.

"I've always considered you to be my son," Albus said softly.

"Yeah, right. You never even wrote to me after Mum took me away with her."

"Don't you think I tried? Not even Fawkes could find you."

Albert laughed, and laughed, and laughed. Albus stood up and left the prison, the laughter of the boy who had once been his son echoing in his ears for all eternity.

END.