

MINERVA'S WAR

Written by

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INT. PALLIATIVE HOSPITAL - NURSE'S STATION - DAY

A very quiet floor, just before the lunch rush.

A DOCTOR drops a package of files on the desk.

NURSE JENKINS, 35, in desperate need of a vacation, is on the phone.

JENKINS

She hasn't spoken to anyone today.

She looks into the SUNROOM and we see --

INT. PALLIATIVE HOSPITAL - SUNROOM - DAY

MINERVA, 97, and long in the tooth, slumped over slightly. She's in a wheel chair in front of a bay window. She's half covered in colourful knitted blanket. Her hands are hidden from view. She looks at a BLUE JAY in a tree outside.

JENKINS (O.S.)

No, we're not sure. She's been down lately.

(beat)

We'll call if something changes.

Minerva fusses with her hands under the blanket. An old BLACK & WHITE photo peaks out.

She looks at it as --

Jenkins walks into the room. She carries a tray full of hospital food.

Minerva stares at the photo while --

Jenkins sets the tray down on a small table with a CLUNK.

Minerva hears the noise. She's busy.

Jenkins waits for a few moments, puts her hands on her hips.

Minerva doesn't budge.

JENKINS (CONT'D)

You're going to have to eat today.

Minerva, defiant.

MINERVA

You're the boss now, are ya?

JENKINS  
Your son called.

The blue jay flies away. Minerva sighs.

Jenkins approaches Minerva's chair. When she goes to turn it around, Minerva taps her hand in a "not-so-friendly" way.

MINERVA  
I got it, I got it.

JENKINS  
He cares about your well-being.

Minerva rolls herself to the table, slowly. She rearranges her blanket, slowly, and hides the photo. Jenkins notices her movement.

JENKINS (CONT'D)  
What's that you have there?

Minerva lifts the lid on the plate.

MINERVA  
None of your business.

Scowl at the food. CLANG.

MINERVA (CONT'D)  
The last time he was here, I  
overheard him say, and I quote,  
"mother is a very expensive pet".

Jenkins, not amused, removes the cover from the plate. She sets it on the table. It is an awful looking mess of food. And chocolate cake.

MINERVA (CONT'D)  
You met him. All he cares about is  
how much I'm worth gone.

JENKINS  
Just eat the cake. Anything! When  
he calls I can at least tell him  
you ate something.

MINERVA  
It's drier than Toby's arse.

Minerva makes a GAG sound and puts her finger down her throat. She looks at Jenkins and removes them.

MINERVA (CONT'D)  
You can tell *him* anything you'd  
damn well like.

Then, Minerva pushes the tray onto the floor --

SMASH... Food everywhere.

Jenkins bends down and scoops up the spilt food into her hands and flings it back on the tray. She clumsily rearranges the dishes and cutlery.

JENKINS  
You're impossible.

MINERVA  
Wouldn't feed it to a dog. And I  
hate dogs.

JENKINS  
Suit yourself.

Jenkins picks up the tray, turns and leaves the room.

Minerva gives her the finger.

Minerva rolls her chair back to the bay window.

The blue jay is back. Minerva smiles.

YOUNG MINERVA (O.S.)  
Is this what you've been waiting  
for your whole life?

Minerva darts her head around.

YOUNG MINERVA, 20s, svelte and sophisticated, is perched on a lounge chair. She's wearing a rich blue pant suit.

MINERVA  
I've lived this life, I get to  
decide how it ends.

Young Minerva doesn't agree.

YOUNG MINERVA  
And you're bound to make it  
miserable for everyone else?

Minerva removes the photo from her blanket again. She rolls it in her fingers.

MINERVA  
I lost everything.

YOUNG MINERVA  
Not everything.

MINERVA  
Huh.

YOUNG MINERVA  
Your son loves you.

MINERVA  
So people keep telling me.

YOUNG MINERVA  
Not everyone can love you the way  
you want them to.

MINERVA  
All he ever does is criticize me.  
Like I haven't--

YOUNG MINERVA  
--had a hard enough life.

Minerva knows that her younger self is right.

She turns back to watch the blue jay.

She rolls the picture in her hands.

She unfurls it - it's a FAMILY PHOTO. Minerva, in her pant  
suit and her husband, CHARLES, in a military uniform, holding  
a baby.

YOUNG MINERVA (CONT'D)  
Would it be so hard to be happy?  
You know you won't be here  
tomorrow.

Minerva knows.

YOUNG MINERVA (CONT'D)  
You've felt it coming for weeks.  
Didn't know what it was, but now  
you do.

MINERVA  
I know.

YOUNG MINERVA  
So, what do you want your son to  
know? That his mother died  
miserable.

Minerva sulks. She doesn't want that.

YOUNG MINERVA (CONT'D)  
Then call him.

INT. PALLIATIVE HOSPITAL - MINERVA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nurse Jenkins is beside Minerva in her wheelchair. Minerva has the phone receiver in her hand. The picture is lying in her lap.

Jenkins dials a number. She leaves the room.

DIAL TONE. Pickup.

SON (O.S.)  
Hello.

MINERVA  
Hello Richard, it's your mother.

RICHARD (O.S.)  
Mom? What's wrong? It's late.

MINERVA  
Nothing's wrong. I have something to tell you.

RICHARD (O.S.)  
Sure. Go ahead.

Minerva clears her throat. Closes her eyes.

MINERVA  
No matter what happens...

RICHARD (O.S.)  
What's going on? The nurse said you were feeling down lately.

MINERVA  
Would you let me finish?

The line goes silent.

MINERVA (CONT'D)  
Promise me that you will put flowers on your father's grave every year. I didn't miss one.

RICHARD (O.S.)  
We always do, mother.

MINERVA

Promise me that you will look after  
Katie. She's the only thing that's  
kept me going.

RICHARD (O.S.)

Yes, mother.

MINERVA

Promise me...

RICHARD (O.S.)

Why tonight? What's this all  
about?

MINERVA

These are things I've never said, I  
thought it's time you know.

RICHARD (O.S.)

Should I come in?

MINERVA

No, best you didn't.

The line goes silent again.

MINERVA (CONT'D)

One last thing. I know I may not  
have shown it, but I did love you,  
Richard. I did.

Minerva wants to say something else, but hesitates.

MINERVA (CONT'D)

That's all. I'm going to bed.  
Goodnight.

RICHARD (O.S.)

Goodnight, mom.

Minerva hangs up the phone.

She rolls herself to bed and gets out of her wheelchair.

She arranges herself on the bed, lifts her legs and gets  
underneath the covers, fully clothed, and goes to sleep.